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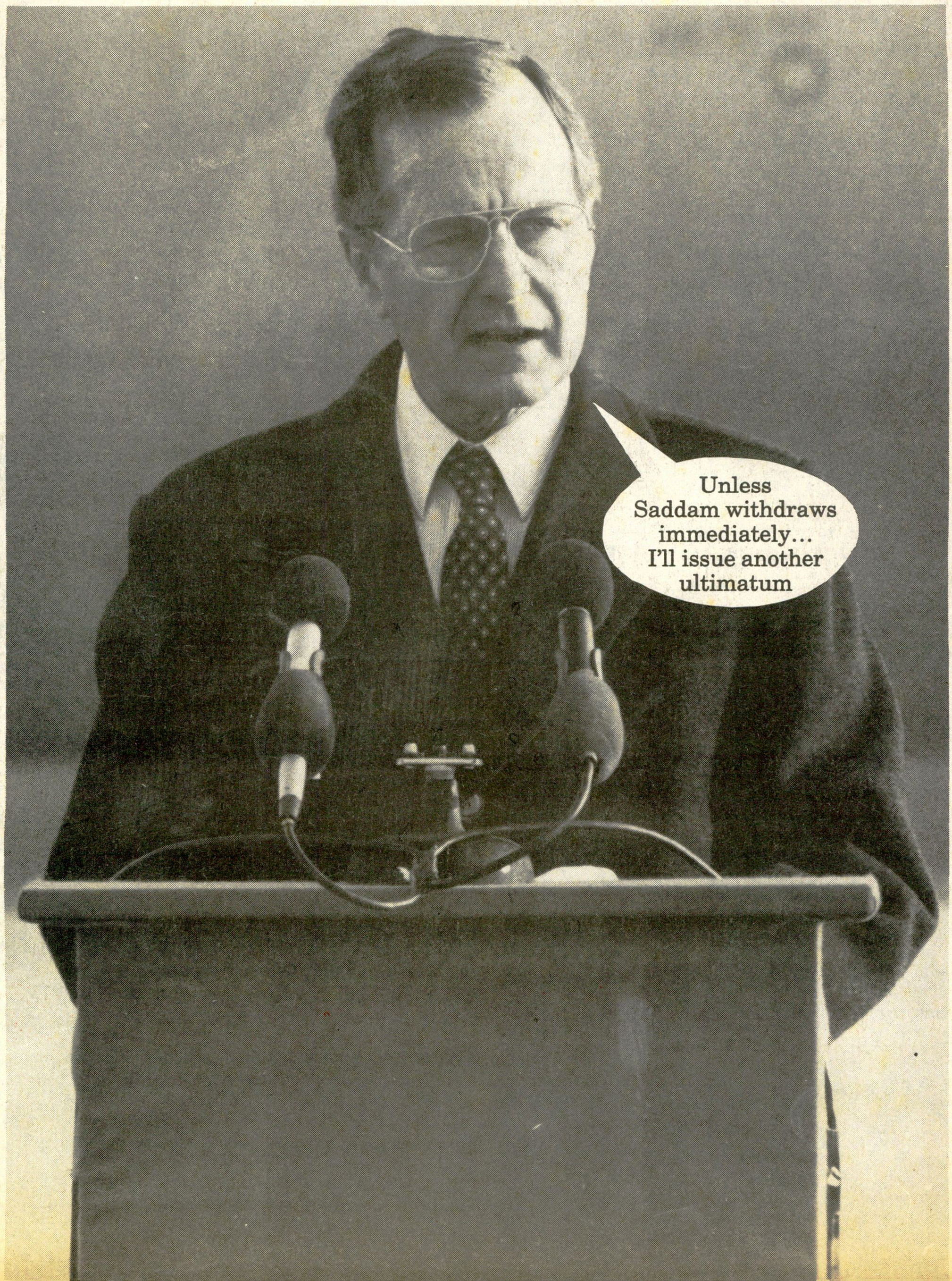

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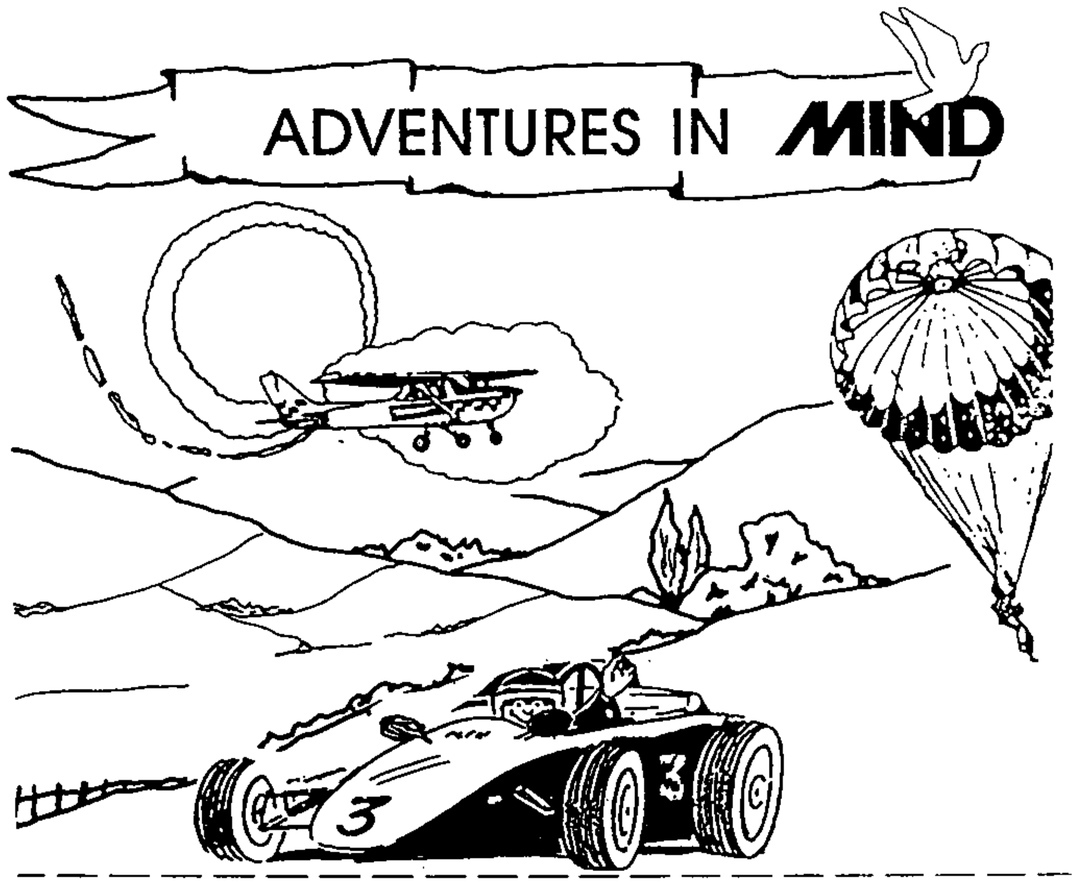

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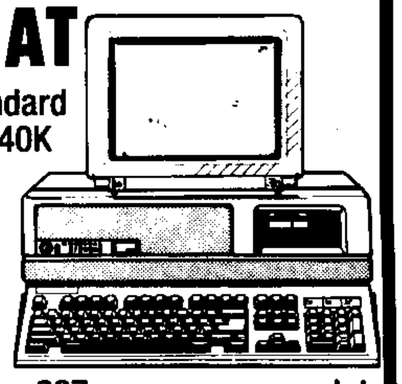

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NEVER let it be said that Lord Gnome is a heartless or unforgiving man.

Despite my quarrels with Mrs Sonia Sutcliffe over the years, I could not help being touched by her moving appeal from the witness box in her recent trial.

She asked not to be referred to as "Mrs Ripper" since her husband had been what she called a "humane killer".

Such a request deserves serious consideration, and I have, after much thought, decided to accede to her wishes.

We will therefore not refer to Mrs Sutcliffe as "Mrs Ripper" ever again. From now on she will be called "Mrs Ripoff".

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A *Private Eye* pamphlet on the whole Sonia Sutcliffe story. A one-off Special Report on the Press, the Law and the Ripper's Wife.

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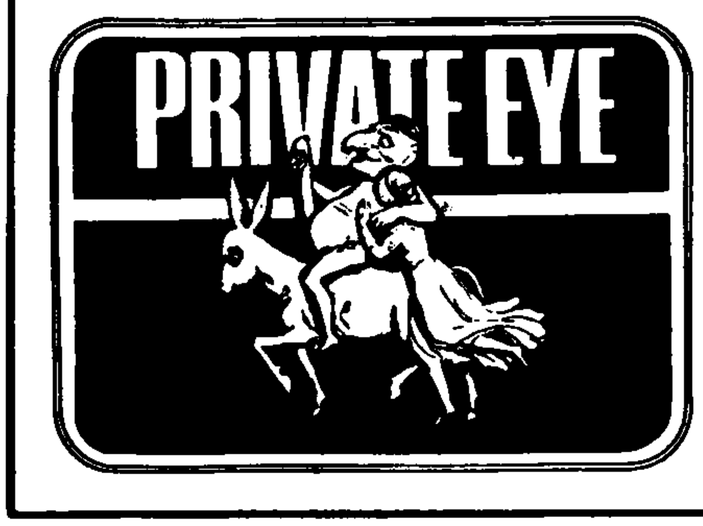


COLOUR SECTION

HONOURS NEWS

LEGAL NOTE: The current fashion in the newspapers to refer to the enormous sums of money paid to the Conservative Party by gentlemen recently honoured in Mrs Thatcher's resignation honours list — or in the new year's list, for that matter — sets a dangerous precedent.

None of the commentators seems to be aware of the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act 1925, which makes it a criminal offence, punishable by up to two years in prison, to offer, accept or receive "any gift, money, or valuable consideration as an inducement or reward for procuring the grant of a dignity or title of honour".

The act was passed after a series of scandals involving the purchase of honours, mainly under Lloyd George's premiership (but also in the subsequent Tory administration). Most of the money for the honours (peerages went at about £30,000 each — worth about a quarter of a million today) found its way into the coffers of the Liberal and Conservative parties.

The act does not say so clearly, but the *Eye's* legal experts take the view that a payment to a political party with the intention of seeking an honour would be a criminal offence by the person who paid, the persons who accepted and the person who arranged for the payment to be made with knowledge of that intention.

WORLD OF HYPE

MRS THATCHER'S favourite PR man, the newly-knighted Sir Tim Bell, will have to look to his spurs in the fierce wars that have broken out in the doomed financial PR field where his firm, Lowe Bell, is a leading player.

Fees are being forced down to the puniest of levels as many clients draw in the purse strings. Sir Tinkerbell must be hoping that his strong list of famous "personal" clients (who have included such names as Weinstock, Halpern, Sterling, Bradman and Fayed), all paying retainers of £100,000 a year or more, do not transfer allegiance to whoever becomes John Major's favourite PR man.

TYCOON UPDATE

WHEN Murdoch publications like the *Sunset Times* and the *Sun* sing in harmony demanding devaluation of sterling, no less, one is prompted to probe the motives.

Could it possibly be that News International's debt and BSkyB losses are in sterling, and that Murdoch is looking for devaluation to reduce his debt ratio? Already News Group offices across the world have cut back on casual and freelance staff until the boss has sweet-talked the bankers.

Murdoch clearly has enough clout in Britain to have broadcasting and anti-monopoly regulations set aside by a grateful government. Can he swing devaluation, too?

Meanwhile there is intrigue on Wall Street over the activities of that other media gargantuan, Robert Maxwell, whose Maxwell Communications Corps has been reducing its debt by selling off assets.

These may be hard times for business, but to give credit where it's due Cap'n Bob is getting a good price from his purchaser — one Mirror Group (prop: R. Maxwell) — which has paid more than £400 million to bail out MCC. Whatever can it all mean?

GULF NEWS

DESPITE the rosy picture painted by the British media of life in the Gulf, morale among some members of the army appears to be far from high.

The main concern, it seems, is the "widescale shortages" in the "fully operational" 7th Armoured Brigade. According to one source, whose written observations escaped the notice of the army censor, "vital chemical protection kit is scarce, food quality and quantities have dropped and the well-publicised desert clothing is of poor quality and in short supply".

He says some soldiers have now opted to wear the northern combat kit as the supplies of desert clothing are made of material that shrinks in the laundry and wears badly in the desert conditions.

But the real beef in the ranks, claims the *Eye*'s informant, is a whopping pay rise for a few just as the cash allowance for water is being cut. The allowance of 25 Saudi riyals was presented to the soldiers as recompense for the hard living conditions.

"Soldiers," he says, "do not seek extra payments and accept the risks of the job when signing on." However, the allowance was much appreciated by all those in the trenches as it enabled them to buy extra soft-drinks and other items from the service shops to make life more comfortable. "Now the allowance is to be taken away since the Saudis are providing water."

At the same time, he reports, personnel living in Bahrain who received a local overseas allowance of £40.00 per day, are to have their allowance increased, backdated to 1 September.

An MoD spokesman explained the apparent shortages and discrepancies thus: "The water allowance was introduced during the initial deployment since a number of difficulties arose over distribution of drinking water; this allowed soldiers to purchase water locally. Now, however, the distribution has been perfected and there is no further need." The spokesman added that the chemical protection gear was the best in the world and shortages were a figment of the imagination.

As for the handsome pay rises, he said: "These things are sorted out locally — there are many variables and we cannot comment."

● *Sonia Sutcliffe and the News of the World — double-page feature, pages 6 & 7.*

"I'm taking up drinking for the New Year"

COURT REPORT

Sutcliffe v. *News of the World*

IN MAY 1989 Mrs Sonia Sutcliffe, the judicially separated wife of Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper, sued *Private Eye* for libel over an article published in January 1981 which was repeated in 1983. It alleged that she had done a deal to sell her story to the *Daily Mail* for £250,000.

Private Eye admitted that the story had been factually incorrect, but sought to defend the action by arguing that Mrs Sutcliffe had been prepared to capitalise on her notoriety as the wife of a mass murderer and to sell her story to the press; and that she had entered into negotiations with the press for this purpose and had concluded two agreements with the press in 1981 and 1984.

In arguing its case, *Private Eye* alleged certain material facts.

First, that Mrs Sutcliffe had considered writing a book about her experience and that she had sought the advice of two *News of the World* journalists, Barry Askew and Stuart Kuttner. Stuart Kuttner had typed some chapters for Sonia Sutcliffe from her draft manuscript and Barry Askew and Kuttner had introduced her to book publishers. Sonia Sutcliffe admitted in the *Private Eye* case and subsequently in the *News of the World* case that if a book were published the *News of the World* would have serialised it.

Second, that she had accepted an interest-free loan of £5,000 from John Rodgers of the Fleet Street News Agency in return for granting him an option on any book she might write. In the course of *Private Eye*'s cross-examination of Mrs Sutcliffe, she described John Rodgers of the Fleet Street News Agency as "a family friend".The loan, which Mrs Sutcliffe had needed in order to pay off her mortgage arrears, had been repaid in 1983 from the proceeds of a libel action. It also emerged that she had approached Rodgers in late 1981 about the possibility of raising a loan through the sale of pictures her husband had painted since his incarceration.

Third, that in 1984 the *Mail on Sunday* had paid £5,000 to Mrs Sutcliffe's solicitor in return for an interview conducted by the journalist Barbara Jones. And in another exchange Mrs Sutcliffe admitted that she had received a £25,000 loan from a "private person" whom she "had occasion to see from time to time... as a friend". The judge ruled that *Private Eye*'s enquiry as to the identity of the lender was a proper one, but Sonia Sutcliffe declined to answer. She denied that this money came from a newspaper "or anything like that", and when invited to identify even the gender of the benefactor, she declined on the grounds that if she were to say it was a man people might speculate that she was having an affair with him. When *Private Eye*'s counsel asked her whether the agreement to borrow money was in writing, she replied: "No, it was by word of mouth only."

The jury dismissed *Private Eye*'s defence and awarded the record sum of £600,000 in damages against the magazine. When *Private Eye* appealed against this award in October 1989, its key argument for ordering a retrial was its assertion that the award had been so excessive that the jury must have been perverse and irrational or must have misdirected themselves to take into account inappropriate matters.

However, there was another argument: new evidence had come to light since the trial which might produce a substantially different result at a retrial. *Private Eye* submitted to the court an affidavit given by Oliver Duke, a journalist and former boyfriend of *Mail on Sunday* journalist Barbara Jones. This affidavit, which was read out by Sonia Sutcliffe's counsel during the *News of the World* trial, stated that in 1987 Duke had in effect been the conduit by which Jones, on behalf of the *Mail on Sunday*, had made a secret payment to Mrs Sutcliffe in return for an interview which had been published on 26 April 1987 under the rubric "No Payment Made". *Private Eye*'s counsel, Gavin Lightman QC, argued in the Court of Appeal that the affidavit, backed up by bank statements, together with Mrs Sutcliffe's concession through her counsel, shortly before the appeal hearing, that Jones had indeed lent her the £25,000, would be sufficient for *Private Eye* to introduce as new evidence at a retrial.

Mr Lightman asked the judges to consider whether Mrs Sutcliffe had misled the court during her original cross-examination. When she had been asked about the £25,000 loan, she had refused to identify the gender of her benefactor, but she had since conceded that the benefactor was actually a benefactress, namely Barbara Jones. Therefore, Mr Lightman argued, her answer about gender had been misleading.

In seeking to rebut this contention, Mrs Sutcliffe's counsel, Mr Geoffrey Shaw, said his client had "nowhere denied that the £25,000 was obtained from a journalist". The trial judge had intervened during her cross-examination on this point and had asked whether the mysterious benefactor was an individual person rather than "a company or newspaper or bank or anything like that", to which Mrs Sutcliffe had replied: "Certainly, it's one private person only." Mr Shaw argued that Mrs Sutcliffe's confusing remarks about the gender of the benefactor had been "an unfortunate answer from a tired witness".

One appeal court judge, Lord Justice Russell, asked Shaw whether, if the £25,000 had been a fee for an interview in the *Mail on Sunday*, Mrs Sutcliffe should receive the same damages as if she had never taken any money from the press, as she had contended in the original trial. "It's not perfect justice," said Mr Shaw. "It's not justice at all," replied Lord Justice Russell crustily. The matter of the £25,000, said the noble judge, was "not completely remote" from the original allegation.

The Court of Appeal subsequently found in favour of *Private Eye* on the single ground that the jury's award had been excessive. It declined to order a retrial on the ground of new evidence, because it was not persuaded of the admissibility or relevance of such evidence. After behind-the-scenes negotiations between *Private Eye* and Mrs Sutcliffe's lawyers, a settlement of £60,000 was reached and a retrial avoided. At the same time, an action brought by Mrs Sutcliffe against *Private Eye* over two other alleged libels was settled for a sum of £100,000. One of these concerned an allegation *inter alia* that she had claimed social security without disclosing her capital resources.

IN NOVEMBER 1990 Mrs Sutcliffe sued the *News of the World* for libel over an article implying that she had had an affair with a Greek hotelier, Mr George Papoutsis, who closely resembled her husband and had deceived him by concealing the identity of her husband, the Yorkshire Ripper. The *News of the World* in turn sued Barbara Jones, Rex Features and George Papoutsis.

The crucial part of the *News of the World*'s defence, as argued by its counsel, George Carman QC, was that Mrs Sutcliffe had perjured herself during the trial of her original action against *Private Eye* and had claimed housing benefits (a form of social security) when not entitled to do so.

The £25,000 which Sonia Sutcliffe had claimed was a loan from "a private person" had in fact come from Barbara Jones. Barbara Jones herself, in her capacity as a party to the action, produced two receipts, for £15,000 and £10,000 respectively, the first one signed by Mrs Sutcliffe's mother, Mrs Szurma, and the second by Sonia Sutcliffe, which stated that the money was in return for Mrs Sutcliffe's cooperation in producing a book about her life with the Ripper. In cross-examination, Mrs Sutcliffe said that she regarded the £25,000 as a charitable loan and/or as a gift, "an act of kindness" rather than a commercial transaction. Sonia Sutcliffe denied the payment to her had any connection with a book.

At the original *Private Eye* trial, on the day that Mrs Sutcliffe had been cross-examined about the £25,000 loan, Barbara Jones (whom *Private Eye* had subpoenaed to appear as a witness) passed a note to Mrs Szurma, Sonia Sutcliffe's mother, during the lunch adjournment. The note read:

Sonia,
If you write or give a name I shall have to give evidence and produce the hand written receipts from you and your mother which say that the personal loan was an advance for the book. So please do not put either of us in this situation. You cannot be compelled.

Mrs Sutcliffe explained that her mother had not passed her this note during the lunch adjournment, but had kept it from her for four or five months until some time in September 1989, even though they had lived together throughout this time. Mrs Sutcliffe said that Barbara Jones had asked her before the *Private Eye* trial not to reveal that she had given her the money.

Mr Carman produced an application for housing benefit which had been filled in by Mrs Sutcliffe in January 1989. In November 1988 she had received £25,000 in settlement of her copyright action against the *Yorkshire Post*. Mr Carman read out the

Those receipts in full...

Receipt 1

This is an agreement between B.J. Jones of Grantham, Lincs, and Mrs Maria Szurma of Bradford, West Yorkshire, by which the sum of £15,000 has been received in cash today, May 6th 1987 by Mrs Szurma.

This represents a loan in advance of a commission fee proposed by publishers towards the preparation of a book, conditional upon the agreement of Sonia Sutcliffe to the preparation of the said book, on the subject of Peter Sutcliffe, and is to be reimbursed to Barbara Jones immediately upon receipt of the commission fee.

(Signed B.J. Jones, 6th May 1987 — signed M. Szurma, 6th May 1987 — witnessed by R.M. Unsworth.)

Receipt 2

This to confirm that I, Sonia Sutcliffe, have today received in cash £10,000 from Barbara Jones. These funds are in payment of research completed towards a written project.

(Signed S. Sutcliffe, received Barbara Jones — dated 23rd June 1987.)

Sonia Sutcliffe — in her own words

On husband, Peter Sutcliffe:

"When my husband killed those people he thought they were immoral and he was saving their souls. He killed them humanely. He took a hammer to the back of their heads and killed them instantly. He thought it was humane, that is what he told me."

"I knew he had VD at one stage. Apparently he sat on a toilet seat warmed from the driver who used it before him. I continue to believe this is how he got VD until it is proved differently."

On divorce:

"I've got more important things to do than divorce my husband."

"My husband was a very staunch catholic and thought it would be a question of ex-communication if there were to be a divorce."

On living at home:

"The reason I live there [at the Ripper's former home] is because moving takes my concentration from my litigation."

On the Bananaballs fund:

"I've not had any penny myself. Indirectly Private Eye paid money to the victims and they have got recompense."

Sutcliffe's notes on victims' compensation claims, read to the Eye trial, May 1989:

"These people graspingly trying to get these monies have not only received injurious compensation already, but most probably press payment, and still they want more. How many times over do they want to be paid and how many times should a person be expected to be?"

application. Mrs Sutcliffe had disclosed invalidity benefit but had put a line through earnings and written "none" next to capital. Mrs Sutcliffe then explained that all of the £25,000 from the *Yorkshire Post* had been distributed by the time she filled in the form, and she agreed to authorise disclosure of her solicitor's client account details during January 1989 to establish this. However, these records disclosed that in December 1988 Sonia Sutcliffe's solicitor had deposited £23,800 into an account at the Newcastle Building Society in Sonia Sutcliffe's name. Sonia Sutcliffe then conceded that she knew she had some money in her account but believed it was a "trifling sum". At a later point in the trial, Mr Carman cross-examined Mrs Sutcliffe's solicitor, Mrs Eileen Pembridge, on this matter. She conceded that at least £5,000 would have been available to Mrs Sutcliffe in January 1989 if she had asked for it.

The jury then asked a question: How did Mrs Sutcliffe or her mother intend to pay back the £25,000 from Barbara Jones if it had not been an advance payment for an article or a book? Mrs Sutcliffe said that she had intended to repay Barbara Jones as soon as she could. Mr Carman put it to Mrs Sutcliffe that it was not until after *Private Eye*'s appeal that she offered to repay the £25,000 to Barbara Jones and that Jones turned her offer down because she said it had not been a loan but a payment. Mrs Sutcliffe agreed.

Asked by Mr Carman about a payment she had received from Mr Stuart Kuttner of the *News of the World*, Mrs Sutcliffe said that she had received £400 from Mr Kuttner on behalf of her sister in recompense for a number of phone calls Mr Kuttner had made from her sister's house. Mrs Sutcliffe said that she had met Mr Kuttner at the Royal Festival Hall and had received £400 in cash. She agreed that she had signed a receipt on behalf of her sister, but denied she had asked Mr Kuttner to insert her sister's name on the receipt to covèr up the fact that the money was for her. The receipt said that the money was in payment for "Broadmoor information" (her husband is incarcerated at Broadmoor security hospital and she had attempted to facilitate a visit to him by a *News of the World* journalist).

During Barbara Jones's cross-examination of Mrs Sutcliffe, details also emerged of Mrs Sutcliffe's earlier plans to write a book about her experiences. She had travelled to New York in 1981 in the company of Mr Kuttner, of the *News of the World*, to open negotiations with publishers there. Mrs Sutcliffe said she thought Mr Kuttner had financed the trip "as a personal friend".

She said that "the object of my going to New York was to sort out my mortgage problems". "Why go to a publisher?" asked the judge, Mr Justice Drake. "Because British publishers didn't want to know," Mrs Sutcliffe replied.

In his closing remarks, Mr Carman accused Mrs Sutcliffe of perjuring herself twice: first at the *Private Eye* trial, and then during the *News of the World* trial. Mr Justice Drake, in his summing-up, invited the jurors to weigh up whether they thought it was likely that a working journalist would have raised a bank loan for £25,000 and given it interest-free purely out of friendship. "Or is it more likely that here was Miss Jones, a working journalist, scenting a very, very good book and that was why she parted with her £25,000 having agreed with Sonia Sutcliffe that Sonia would provide material for the book?"

The jury returned a verdict in favour of the defendants.

Behind the Scenes

Barbara Jones

ANYONE TEMPTED to join in the universal adulation of Barbara Jones, the *Mail on Sunday* journalist at the heart of the Sonia Sutcliffe/*News of the World* trial, should take a closer look at her role in the whole business.

She only came into the action when the *News of the World* found out that she had been instrumental in setting up their "Sonia and the Greek Ripper Lookalike" story. *They* joined *her* to the action and only at this point — when threatened herself — did Barbara Jones decide to tell the world what she knew about Sonia Sutcliffe.

Up until the last minute Jones had been cultivating a friendship with her with the intention of writing a book on the Yorkshire Ripper.

It is worth considering the following:

● In 1988 Barbara Jones booked a Greek holiday for herself and Sonia Sutcliffe. Jones's former boyfriend, Christopher Cousins, then the *Mail on Sunday* lawyer, paid the deposit; Sonia and Barbara met George Papoutsis in Athens; and the photographer Ian Parry — unbeknown to Sutcliffe — travelled to Greece separately.

The *News of the World* claimed that Sutcliffe and Papoutsis had a romance — it ran the story with pictures provided by Ian Parry.

Sonia Sutcliffe was in effect set up and Barbara Jones was forced to admit in court what the *Eye* had revealed several months ago — that £23,500 of the £25,000 paid by the *News of the World* to Rex Features for the story about Sonia Sutcliffe's alleged "sizzling affair" with George Papoutsis went to Barbara Jones. Jones told the court that most of this money had been passed on to the photographer Ian Parry who (still without Mrs Sutcliffe's knowing) had followed her and Barbara during their Greek holiday, snapping them in their bathing costumes.

Parry has since died in a plane accident in Romania, so was not able to tell the court how much Jones had given him, nor to confirm or deny her story that the money was paid through her bank account because he was having trouble with the tax authorities.

● Parry was also paid £30,000 by the *News of the World* for a story it printed during the *Private Eye* trial about Sonia Sutcliffe's close relationship with the "Galloping Major". Wilson Cooper, who was photographed with Sonia by Parry near Hampton Court. Parry said at the time he had followed Sonia back to Hampton Court from the trial. More probably he was tipped off about Sonia's address by his colleague Barbara Jones, who knew where she was living and with whom.

● Papoutsis was introduced to the newspaper agency Rex Features by Barbara Jones when he managed to get a photo of Sonia Sutcliffe and her elderly father together. This also appeared in the *News of the World*. When Papoutsis visited the Sutcliffe family home Barbara Jones and Parry booked into a local Bradford hotel, again on the lookout for photo opportunities.

● When the *Eye* lost its libel action against Mrs Sutcliffe, who was awarded £600,000 damages, Barbara Jones had proof positive that the *Eye's* basic allegation — that the Ripper's wife was prepared to capitalise on the notoriety of the Ripper by selling her story for publication — was true. The proof was in the receipts Jones had received from Sonia and her mother accepting £25,000 as payment for co-operation with a book Jones was writing (and has now written) about the Ripper. This £25,000 had come to Jones via another boyfriend, Oliver Duke, in a cheque from her employers, Associated Newspapers, owner of the *Mail on Sunday*.

Jones claimed in court that the *Mail on Sunday* editor, Stewart Steven, had agreed to pay this money as "an advance" on serial rights for her book. Had the facts about this payment come out at the trial, the *Eye* would almost certainly have won its action, or at least faced much lower damages.

● Barbara Jones attended much of the *Eye* trial, yet kept absolutely quiet about the payment. Indeed, when it looked as though Sonia might blurt out the identity of the "friend" who had lent her £25,000, Jones The Friend sent a note to Sonia's mother warning that if Sonia named Jones or the *Mail on Sunday* in her evidence, she (Jones) would disclose the receipts, thus ruining Sonia's case.

Asked in the recent trial to explain this rather unusual pressure on a witness who was giving evidence in the high court, Jones said she was protecting Sonia. In fact she was protecting herself and her newspaper (and her lucrative book contract with Weidenfeld) at the expense of *Private Eye* and the truth.

● Though the *Mail on Sunday* still says it never paid a penny to Sonia Sutcliffe, the fact remains that £25,000 was paid to Barbara Jones's lover Duke (who never worked for the *Mail on Sunday*); that the money found its way into the bank account of Sonia Sutcliffe — and that Mr Steven, when he released the money, knew perfectly well that his chief reporter was engaged in writing about the Ripper, from which endeavour he intended his newspaper should profit. Where does that leave him with the now defunct Press Council, the families of the Ripper's victims and with his proprietor, Lord Rothermere, who told the world so definitely that not a penny of his group's money should find its way to any of the relatives of the worst mass murderer this century?

● At the end of this sordid story, few people have made much money from it. The *Eye* certainly hasn't. Parry is dead. Sonia Sutcliffe is broke. But Barbara Jones's initial investment of £25,000, generously forwarded by Stewart Steven, will pay off handsomely.

Eileen Pembridge

EILEEN PEMBRIDGE has been solicitor to Sonia Sutcliffe since 1987.

One matter is of particular interest to the *Eye*:

● In the action against *News of the World* she gave evidence herself.

She was firstly examined by Geoffrey Shaw, barrister for Sonia Sutcliffe, as to when she was aware of the receipts that showed her client had received funds from Barbara Jones. She thought that she probably knew on 19 September 1989. George Carman, for the *NoW*, pressed her in cross-examination and emphasised the importance of the date. She agreed it was important and said on re-examination by Shaw that she would look up her files.

Those files were subsequently made available to Carman for inspection and Shaw applied to re-examine Mrs Pembridge in relation to them. Carman and his team looked at the files for some 40 minutes but to their amazement found no reference to the vital receipts. Carman returned to court and said his junior, James Price, could not find any reference to the receipts either.

Carman then raised the issue of the receipts in relation to *Private Eye*. He pointed out that the *Eye*'s solicitors, Schilling & Lom, had faxed a letter to Mrs Pembridge which asked about documents on 28 September 1989. Among other matters, the *Eye* raised the issue of the receipts for £15,000 and £10,000. Carman was unhappy with the limited discovery and asked for wider scope.

Mr Justice Drake granted this and extended discovery up to the date of the *Eye* appeal — 3 October 1989.

At this point Mrs Pembridge left the court in a hurry. Carman's team presumed she was returning to her offices in Stockwell to facilitate the additional discovery. After some time Carman's team tried to get hold of Mrs Pembridge as they were waiting in Carman's office, but all to no avail. Carman then telephoned Sonia Sutcliffe's counsel who said Mrs Pembridge had been taken ill and would not be returning to court. The interesting discovery thus never happened.

Geoffrey Shaw

IN HIS closing speech, George Carman QC suggested that "sometimes clients put lawyers in embarrassing positions".

He was referring to poor old Geoffrey Shaw, Mrs Sutcliffe's barrister, who claimed at the time of the *Private Eye* appeal that his client Mrs Sutcliffe had admitted that £25,000 had been loaned to her from Barbara Jones.

In the *News of the World* case Shaw had to sit there and listen to his client tell the court that some of it was a gift. And he also had to listen to the receipts for the £25,000 being read out which suggested the monies had been advanced for a book deal.

Even worse, Shaw had to watch these written records of the transaction being produced when his client had previously told the court that the agreement was *not* recorded in writing.

Very embarrassing.

Grovel

MY FRIEND Anthony Haden-Guest returns from covering the hostage crisis in Beirut for *Vanity Fair* with a bizzare tale to tell.

He was staying at the Cavalier Hotel in west Beirut and decided to go out in search of a discotheque in the company of an Italian hack. The next thing he remembered was waking up in his hotel room the following morning, covered in bruises and missing his plastic watch. "I was bruised in every quadrant of my body," Unwanted-Guest told me grandiloquently.

He immediately complained to the hotel management that he had been the victim of a mugging in his room and that his watch had been stolen. Later, however, the hotel staff found his watch with only half its strap on the marble staircase.

It was at that moment that Haden-Guest remembered the identity of his assailant. Returning to his room in a tired and emotional state, he had been ascending the stairs when completely unaided he had tripped and fell, tumbling down a couple of flights and losing his watch in the process. He had, in fact, succeeded in "mugging" himself.

JOHN MORTIMER tells me that fellow author Jeffrey Archer has given him a brilliant new idea for his popular television series, *Rumpole of the Bailey*.

Taking Mortimer aside at a book signing, Archole confided in a state of excitement: "I've got a great idea for you, John... You must kill Rumpole... Kill him!"

I HEAR that gorgeous, pouting *Torygraph* hackette Jane Thynne had lunch recently with would-be life peer Jeffrey Archer.

When "Lord" Archole arrived at Le Caprice, he apologised to Ms Thynne for being late, explaining with slippery charm: "I said to my secretary that I'm not going to be late for Jane Thynne of the *Daily Telegraph*, not under any circumstances."

He went on to tell the hackette that the phone had rung just as he had been on his way out through the door and that he had said to his secretary: "I'm not going to take that call... Not even if it's Mrs Thatcher." His secretary had then informed him that it was indeed the Leaderene — and Archole took the call...

I AM delighted to see that my old friend Perishing Worthless has received the knighthood he so richly deserves after years of *arslikhan* before the throne of Thatcher.

Perry, it may be recalled, recently suggested that anyone aspiring to public office should be carefully vetted to ensure there are no skeletons in their cupboard — mistresses, rent-boys and so forth.

No such tests are applied to the recipients of knighthoods, it seems. This is just as well, since Sir Peregrine is best known for saying "fuck" on television and for enjoying a homosexual romp on a sofa with epicene jazzman George Melly. He also maintained a mistress for some years, in the comely form of actress Moira Fraser. Her Majesty, we must assume, is broad-minded about such things.

Pseuds Corner

"Reality," John Lennon once said, "leaves a lot to the imagination." A Wildean aphorism, it makes one smile. Ten years after his death it prompts me to ask, now that he has become a myth, a legend, an apotheosis, does it matter any more what he was really like?

MAUREEN CLEAVE
Telegraph magazine

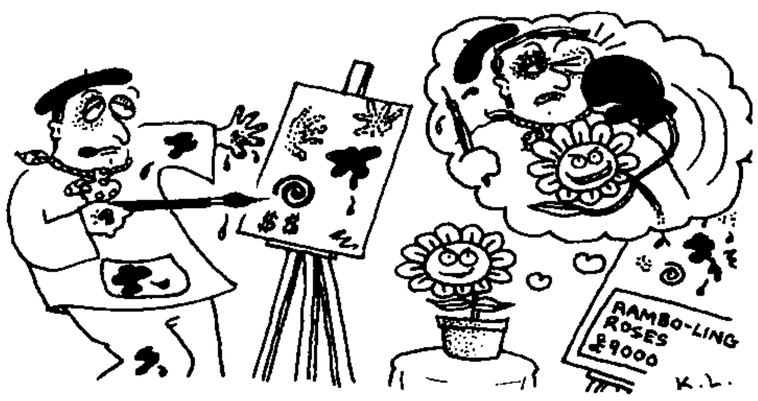
One day, Noah blows his nose into a Kleenex and starts to replace the tissue in the box. Patiently, his mother [Debra Winger] reminds him why this is not a good idea: "Honey when you blow your nose in a Kleenex, you don't put it back in the box. I know it seems unecological, but remember how we talked about fulfilling a Kleenex's destiny by blowing your nose in it? Afterwards you have to send it onto a new life and you have to put it in the trash." Noah happily trots off with the soiled Kleenex in hand.

Vanity Fair

South West Thames Regional Health Authority has a new logo. It is being introduced as the Authority moves from the old to the new style of working.

The brief of the graphic designers, First Impression of Richmond, was "produce a design that is distinctive and lively without being obvious or static".

ROGER SILVER
RHA News



"Some artists paint flowers. I paint what the flower is thinking."

SYLVESTER STALLONE
News of the World

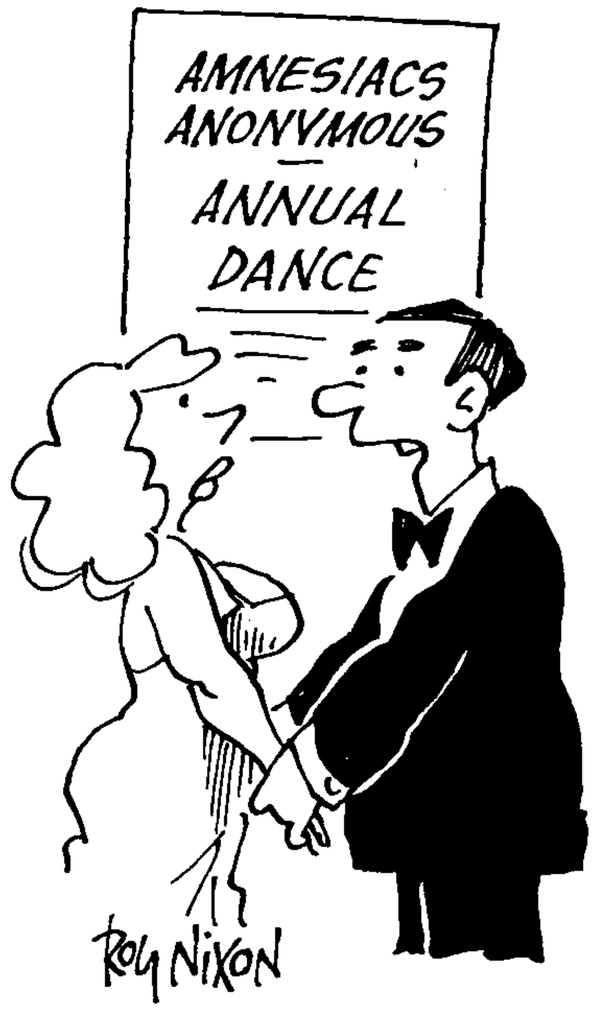
Like some subter-fulminant peak he [Bernard Levin] dominates the landscape of journalism.

JEFFREY ABBOTT
The Times

CONTRIBUTORS: E. Strobes, L.J. Halsey, Leslie Howard, Iain K. Petrie, E. Strobes.

£10 paid for entries

"I'm amazed he could open the envelope"



"Do I come here often?"

MY FRIEND William Shawcross spent the festive season trying to finish his biography of Rupert Murdoch before the Dirty Digger goes bust. But he interrupted his labours to tell me of a letter he has discovered, from Dame Harold Evans to Rupert in the early 1980s, discussing possible candidates for the editorship of *The Times*.

The list of names included that of Alexander Chancellor, then the *bon vivant* editor of the *Spectator* and now the even more *bon vivant* editor of the *Indie* magazine. Evans told the Digger that Chancellor must on no account be hired. "I came to the conclusion," he explained, "that he represents that effete old tired England..."

Oddly enough, when I break this news to poor Alexander he seems thrilled to bits.

● *CONGRATULATIONS to Sir Alistair Burnett on the damehood for his colleague Sue Tinson, associate editor of ITN, in the Leaderene's resignation honours list.*

As she is Sir Arsliquer's constant companion at parties and other social functions, he must be delighted that Dame Tinson at last has a title to match his own.

I MUST offer belated congratulations to Brian Hitchen CBE of the *Daily Star* ("Mrs Thatcher is magnificent") and Sir Nick Lloyd of the *Daily Express* ("Mrs Thatcher has been fantastic"), both of whom prostrated themselves before our late PM with an admirable lack of shame or embarrassment. I cannot resist exhuming a prescient item from *Eye* 674 (16 October 1987):

"Eve Pollard... believes that she and her ghastly spouse, Nick Lloyd, are within sniffing distance of the Honours List. After all, Sir David English got his knighthood for helping the Tories win the 1979 election. Why shouldn't Sir Nick be rewarded for the *Express's* efforts in 1987? Whereupon she, of course, would become Lady Lloyd.

"The ambitious duo advanced their case considerably by ostentatiously spending election night at Conservative Central Office. A bit more brown-nosing should do the trick."

I like to think that it was my exhortation which encouraged Eve and Nick to persevere in their quest. But I was not quite right in suggesting that she would be Lady Lloyd. "It's Eve Pollard for work," milady graciously explained to *UK Press Gazette* last week. "I'll never change that, but of course I'll use Lady Lloyd whenever I am acting as his consort."

Pip Pip!

NOOKS and CORNERS

IT IS TIME to consider the Macmillan Award for 1990. This prestigious mark of recognition for official vandalism was, of course, inspired by Harold Macmillan's supreme role as prime minister in destroying the Euston Arch, but that man's other crimes also have a bearing on the award. For those who seek, for some inexplicable reason, to exonerate the cynical old poseur from the shameful events in Austria in 1945 argue that, first, he did not know what was going on and, second, even if he did, he was only obeying orders. This defence — when made by mere Germans rather than old Etonians — was unconvincing at Nuremberg, yet such excuses remain commonplace for civil servants and for those who run local authorities.

When considering the worst local authority in 1990, our distinguished panel of judges — Lord Aldington, The Hon Nicholas Ridley and Mr T. Dan Smith — had, as always, a wide field to choose from. Strong contenders included Durham County Council whose leader, Don Robson, remains impressively determined to promote profitable developments in the ancient cathedral city in defiance of all local and national planning guidelines *(Eyes passim ad nauseam)*. Then there is Warwick District Council, so anxious in the pursuit of profit to rebuild Leamington Spa as a neo-Regency stage-set *(ditto)*. But, in the event, our judges decided to give the award for the last year of the Late Leaderene's Reign to an outsider and a most model Thatcherite local authority: Bexley Borough Council.

Only Bromley could exceed Bexley in Thatcherite orthodoxy. Administering a large swathe of outer London semi-detached suburbia, this local authority has but one embarrassment which it has found difficult to privatise or otherwise dispose of at a profit regardless of public good. This is, of course, an historic building: Danson Park — a Georgian mansion purchased by the municipality in 1924 whose grounds have been used as a public park ever since.

The estate was originally laid out by Capability Brown while Danson Park itself was a fine work of 1762 by Sir Robert Taylor with interiors partly by Sir William Chambers. It is listed Grade I and is the sort of historic building of which any responsible local authority would be immensely proud: a precious jewel in its banal municipal crown. But not in Bexley, for the house along with its stables were allowed to become derelict in 1970 and are now in a deplorable condition.

Others have had more vision. In 1984 Mr Laurie Taylor, a builder who makes plaster mouldings, proposed to restore Danson Park as both a home and offices and showrooms. Three years later, with the promise of a 50 percent grant of £324,000 from English Heritage, Mr Taylor secured planning permission and work began. Then things went wrong. English Heritage chose to disapprove of the way in which the restorations were carried out (at a lower cost than usual by direct labour) and work came to a halt in 1988. There is now a bureaucratic impasse, while a new interested developer now claims that it needs a grant of £1.2 million to proceed.

Nobody comes out well of this story. English Heritage has reflected that quango's increasingly bureaucratic and unimaginative character, but difficult as Mr Taylor may have been, he has at least spent much of his own money on the structure, has repaired the roof after the gales of 1987 and, by living in the building, has protected it from further decay and vandalism.

But it is the behaviour of Bexley Borough Council which is most reprehensible. Rather than try to break the deadlock and assist the restoration, it has refused to issue the leases which Mr Taylor needs to fund the resumption of work and now threatens legal action against him if the second developer withdraws. Bexley has even announced that it wishes to seek listed building consent to demolish Danson Park. In 1989, Mr Len Newton, leader of the council (Con.) stated that: "We are not prepared to spend any money at all on this building... I have always hoped it would fall down and solve the problem for us."

Never mind that the ordinary people of Bexley might enjoy Danson Park if it were restored for them: there speaks the authentic voice of Mrs Thatcher's Britain. Macmillan would surely have been proud of this local luminary of his beloved Conservative Party.

AS FOR 1991, we have Dublin as "European City of Culture" to look forward to and laugh at. The behaviour of Mr Haughey's political party in reducing a once magnificent Georgian city to a polluted, car-ridden, derelict building site is worthy of comparison not with the Conservative Party of Macmillan but with the policies of the late leader of Romania. It will be instructive to see what foreign visitors think as they search, largely in vain, for the relics of what was once one of the most elegant and civilised 18th century cities of Europe. Happy new year — and watch this space.

'Piloti'

HEALTH NEWS

RIVERSIDE health authority's scheme to pull out of its London sites (see *Eyes passim*) is gathering momentum amid a rush of own-goals.

The health authority has asked Westminster city council to incorporate underground car parks into the planning briefs for its Westminster Hospital and Children's Hospital sites. At a Westminster planning sub-committee meeting before Christmas, one Labour councillor pointed out that the Children's Hospital site was just across the road from... disused underground car park.

Meanwhile the Children's Hospital research laboratories in Vincent Square were due to be moved back into a basement in Udall Street shortly before Christmas — the same basement from which the laboratories were moved in 1955 because they were deemed to be antiquated.

Presumably the laboratory equipment has grown since then, as some of it is now too big to fit through the door. No money can be found to widen the door — but the Westminster Hospital special trustees can find £100,000 to donate to a project to bring arts and dance to the new £206 million Westminster & Chelsea Hospital.

POLICE 5

IN AN AMAZING twist to the Ged Corley affair in Greater Manchester (see *Eyes passim*), the *Eye* has discovered that ex-PC Corley may have been jailed on the erroneous testimony of a "dodgy" Home Office forensic scientist.

Readers will recall that last year Corley was freed from a 17-year sentence for supplying weapons to criminals when it was shown that he may have been set up by double-dealing Manchester supergrasses. But as part of the prosecution's case, a Home Office forensic report had identified Corley as one of the three people whose hairs had been found on a ski-mask which had been worn during an armed robbery.

During the investigation into complaints about Corley's prosecution — launched, ironically, by the copper who had nailed him, Inspector Peter Jackson — Manchester villains repeatedly swore that Corley could not have worn the mask. Unsurprisingly, with their record of unreliability, the villains' claims were repeatedly ignored.

Now it turns out that the crooks were not lying: the Home Office has admitted that it botched the forensic findings and that Corley's hairs weren't on the mask, after all. Naturally, Manchester sleuths are wondering how many other unfortunates have been similarly implicated.

The season of goodwill, meanwhile, appears to have escaped West Yorkshire police who shortly before Christmas arrested Jackson himself, even though it was his concern over Corley's trial which led to their investigation in the first place! Jackson may now be charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

Alteratively, the entire episode may have been staged by the stalag-trained West Yorks cops to see if Jackson would "crack" under pressure, drop his complaints and close the case. Inevitably, Jackson has now lodged a formal complaint against two named WY coppers alleging wrongful arrest and false imprisonment under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. This one looks set to run longer than *Dixon of Dock Green*.

UN NEWS

AS THE exiled emir of Kuwait knows, all a small country facing bullies has to do is call in the United Nations security council — unless, that is, you are a small Pacific atoll with no oil and it is against the United States that you want help.

As the council wound down for Christmas, a surprise item came up: on the nod, James Baker's dozen in the council dissolved the UN strategic trusteeship over three Pacific territories which had been exercised by the US since 1945.

In so doing, they ignored the pleas of the elected governor of the Northern Mariana Islands, Lorenzo De Leon Guerroro. Despite a typhoon hampering communications, he sent a fax to the UN pointing out that ending the trusteeship would leave the US as an effective colonial power. Under the current agreement, the US claims all waters more than three miles from the Marianas' coast as US territorial waters.

In the past the Soviets had threatened to veto termination until such issues were settled. This time they voted along with the US and UK. There will doubtless soon be a lot of tuna fish on sale in Moscow.

NUMERO UNO

MICHAEL HEATH

The Queen

(all channels)

IT IS tempting to think that *The Queen* is immovable, unchanged, identical in content every year. But, although finding significance in absolutely everything is best left to Umberto Eco, there is more to the annual royal address than might at first be thought.

Admittedly, the programme was exactly the same for many decades, under the direction of lackey and BBC hack Dick Cawston, producer by appointment to *The Queen* and to *The Royal Family*, the soft documentary which, in the mid-sixties, began the stripping of mystery from the British royal family which was to reach its horrible apotheosis in the publication of *Budgie The Little Helicopter* by the Duchess of York.

In the mid 1980s, however, two changes were forced. Cawston died and, instead of despatching an equivalent timeserver to the palace, the BBC invited Brenda to choose her own director. She selected Sir David Attenborough who, for all his remarkable national service to the art of elegantly describing animals fucking, had no real track record as a director. Some believe that the royal command was, in fact, intended for Sir *Richard* Attenborough, whose *Gandhi* had just one an Oscar, with Brenda envisaging vast crowd scenes and her little nut-brown husband in a loin cloth. Others believe that Sir David was simply the only person working in television of whom the Queen had ever heard, her lifetime's viewing having been restricted to *Life On Earth*, which all the middle classes watched, and *It's A Royal Knockout*, with which her two younger sons and her daughters-in-law ensured the eventual removal of the British monarchy.

Anyway, Sir David pledged himself to edging the presenter away from the animated-postage-stamp format on which Cawston had relied. Always happiest with animals in shot, he posed Brenda, in his first year in control, between two huge horses. In subsequent years, there was location filming, footage from private family functions, even a *Nationwide*-style walking shot across a bridge.

Aside from Sir David's visual ambitions, these innovations were necessary because of what became known in the 80s as Thatcherite Competition. As part of her attempts to establish a secular monarchy at Number 10 — which also included the adoption of the first person pronoun and the sending of prime ministerial telegrams to centenarians — Margaret Thatcher started making a national Christmas Day television broadcast on Noel Edmonds' yuletide morning television show. One year, wearing an almost identical dress and posing beside a startlingly similar tree, she got in several hours before the Queen.

This year, however, all the Attenborough trappings had gone. We were back to the talking postage stamp, with an almost unbroken medium close-up of Brenda at her desk held throughout the 10 minutes and none of the home video footage of little Princess Eugenie's baptism which grannies across the nation had been confidently expecting.

Why was this? One possible explanation is that it was because of the departure of Thatcher. In this analysis, the 1990 edition of *The Queen* demonstrates the danger of monopolies, with Brenda and Sir David falling back to the flabby, lackadaisical practices of the past as a result of having no other shrill middle-aged woman competing with them for the public ear.

The other, and more likely, explanation is grimmer. The Queen was preparing her people for war. Requesting austerity direction from Attenborough, she was reminding her people that this was no time for the peace-time frivolities of cutaways and zoom shots. "The invasion of Kuwait," she said, "was an example of an international scale of an evil which has beset us at different levels in recent years — attempts by ruthless people to impose their will on the peaceable majority." A later paragraph revealed: "I never cease to admire the stoical courage of the people of Northern Ireland." Between these two passages was a tribute to the spirit of Dunkirk.

Lord St John of Fawsley and others trembled on television during the Tory leadership election about the horrific possibility of the Queen having to become involved in politics. There are those who would argue that linking the Battle of Britain with the army presence in Belfast and the fight for Saudi oil hardly illustrates a lofty constitutional removal from politics.

It is, of course, only the inertia of the holiday period which has prevented Tory MPs from complaining yet about this clear case of political bias in broadcasting.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

IT MAY SEEM that Lord Chalfont has been dictating the future of broadcasting for the last 11 years or so, but his new Radio Authority only began life officially on new year's day.

The peer's first task is to advertise the franchise for a national commercial station (coveted by Lord Hanson, owner of London's somnolent Melody Radio). The Government's insistence that the winner broadcast a non-pop format makes real profits unlikely; but there'll still be a lot of rich men vying with Hanson for control.

One man who won't be bidding is Rupert Murdoch. As a newspaper owner he would be limited to a 20 percent stake in any successful consortium and he, as everbody knows, prefers full, unregulated, control. This is why he is developing his own radio service free from Chalfont's interference.

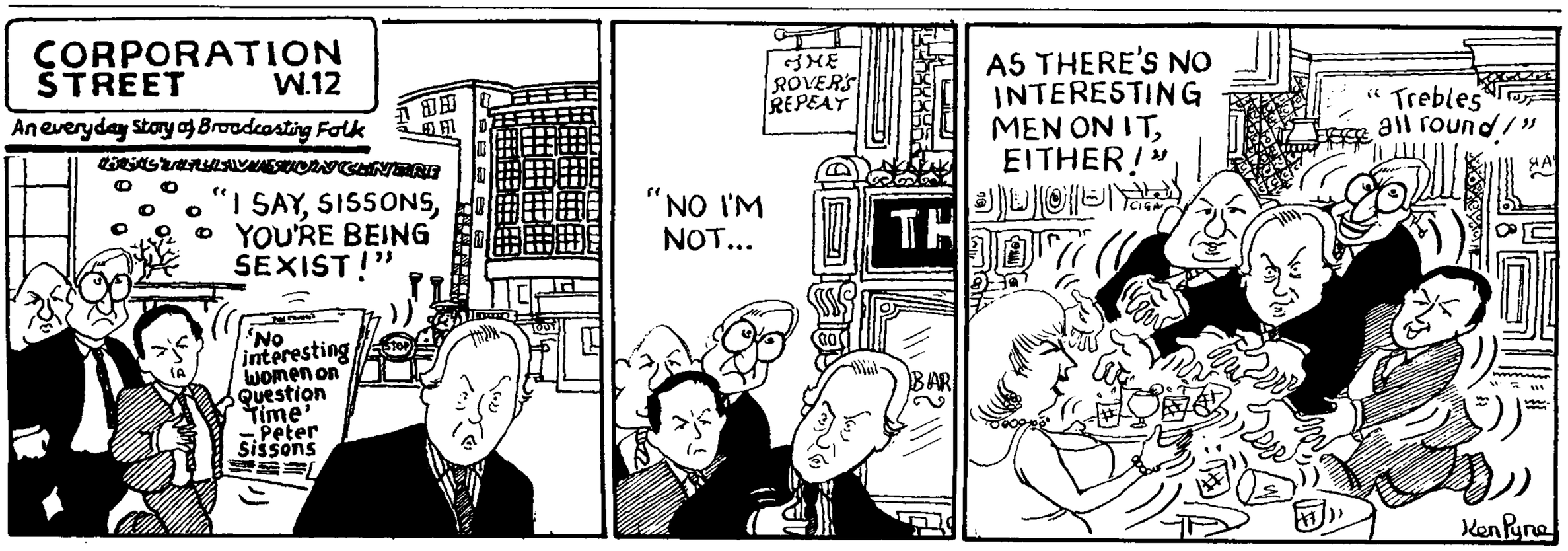
Murdoch's pillage of BSB has obscured the fact that anyone with a satellite dish can pick up audio channels as well as TV stations. Boring Sky Radio thus has a potential audience of more than a million, a figure far exceeding that for BBC Radio 3, for example, with its costly obligations to provide live music and original drama.

The Digger isn't, however, alone in using the Astra satellite to by-pass the expensive franchise process: the French controlled conglomerate CLT has launched a satellite version of its ancient medium wave station Radio Luxembourg, and students' unions are being encouraged to relay the service free of charge to woo Radio 1 listeners.

Probably the most successful satellite station is Radio Nova, run by millionaire former pirate Chris Cary and his volatile Irish girlfriend Sybil Fennel. Cary broadcast conventionally from Dublin for eight years before decamping to Surrey. His departure was not mourned locally because although Nova was hugely popular in Ireland, and for that matter the north of England, Cary's rottweiler management techniques and low pay led to constant clashes with the unions, especially the NUJ. That such a profit hungry operator has chosen the satellite route, rather than tempting Lord Chalfont with his wares, may prompt those seeking a franchise to think again.

Meanwhile Owen Oyston's determination to apply for a national franchise is attracting unkind comments from fellow broadcasters. The socialist millionaire bought Radio Radio, a night-time music service for local stations, from Richard Branson (*Eye* 739) and promised vast success. Under Branson listeners heard Jonathan Ross, Bob Harris, Johnnie Walker and Gary King; Oyston decided to axe the big names and integrate Radio Radio with his Manchester-based Piccadilly stations.

Predictably, audience figures fell, advertising dried and Radio Radio went off air with losses of around £250,000. The new Radio Authority will no doubt be asking itself: if Oyston can't make a service covering most of Scotland, Northern Ireland and the north of England pay, how could he succeed nationally?


CORPORATION STREET W.12
An everyday Story of Broadcasting Folk
"I SAY, SISSONS, YOU'RE BEING SEXIST!"
'No interesting women on Question Time' – Peter Sissons
THE ROVER'S REPEAT
"NO I'M NOT...
BAR
AS THERE'S NO INTERESTING MEN ON IT, EITHER!"
"Trebles all round!"
Ken Pyne

BBC EXECUTIVES in Belfast are girding themselves for one last attempt to protect their huge investment in a replica night spot: the aptly-named Joker Club, specially built as the setting for a "provocative" Saturday night chat and satire programme called *The Show*.

The awful first edition featured nonentities Derek Hatton, Cynthia Payne, James Whale and SDLP MP Seamus Mallon. Predictably none was either interesting or funny (although Whale is usually worth laughing *at*). Unfortunately for the BBC, though, the interviews were sandwiched between boring sketches about religion. Disaster struck when embarrassed co-presenter Rhonda Paisley (relation) tried to interview Mallon about his career. The dour MP ignored her and instead denounced the BBC for blasphemy and sacrilege.

Meanwhile Rhonda's voluble father, the Rev Ian, complained by about the programme by fax, his messages being so strong that the local BBC controller contemplated initiating libel proceedings. La Paisley quickly resigned from the programme, as did the other presenter, Eamon Holmes, a couple of days later.

The Show ploughed on with new presenters, continued criticism from the God lobby and with viewers turning to ITV in droves. In desperation the BBC has drafted in Hank Wangford as co-host with Ulster hack Sean Rafferty. Hopes of a quiet season vanished when loyalist politicians discovered that Wangford had appeared at Troops Out benefits in England. To ritual calls for a boycott of the licence fee, BBC nerves have not been improved by a perfectly-timed intervention from Sinn Fein — congratulating the apointment of Wangford.

Cult Corner

CULT WATCHERS will be baffled to learn that Dr Eileen Barker's Inform group is busy counting out new piles of taxpayers' cash courtesy of the Home Office.

Inform, *Eye* readers will recall, was set up by Dr Barker, a sociology teacher at the London School of Economics, to "monitor" new religious groups. The Government, looking for impartial advice after public concern about financial deception and alleged brainwashing by cults, gave Inform a cash injection.

"We decided to support the establishment of Inform because we believe that the best approach towards the activities of cults is publicly to expose their true nature," Lord Ferrers, a Home Office minister, said.

However, secret minutes from a meeting in the United States, which Barker attended, say: "Eileen [Barker] has taken a very significant step in neutralizing anti-cult movements in the UK." Barker personally marked the minutes "confidential" before distributing them to colleagues.

When an MP complained privately to the Home Office after seeing the minutes, Lord Ferrers replied: "While the reference to 'neutralising anti-cult movements in the UK' may, *prima facie*, seem surprising, you will of course be aware that some 'anti-cult' groups engage in the criminal activity of 'de-programming', to which Inform is rightly opposed."

Dr Barker's globe-trotting has included a visit to a Unification Church conference with expenses paid by the Moonies; but the Home Office says there are "no grounds" for believing she is "tainted". As Inform works out how to spend its loot, Dr Barker is now able to give up her role as the organisation's "honorary director".

STREET OF SHAME

THE *TIMES*, in its whimsical way, philosophised last week on a City page: "There's nothing like Christmas Eve for announcing the bad news its subjects might prefer was never read. Some items, however, deserve a proper audience."

The article then went on to list some of the disagreeable tidings which might otherwise have escaped notice. But one particularly disagreeable item was overlooked – the parlous state of Rupert Murdoch's debt-ridden media empire.

Shareholders in News International were left to decide for themselves if this was because nothing embarrassing or favourable had happened to the tottering company built on tick — or because not even Murdoch's own hacks could think of anything upbeat to say about the Dirty Digger.

DEBT-RIDDEN businessman Asil Nadir looks like receiving some financial help from an unexpected quarter — the *Indescribablyboring*.

When Nadir's fruit-to-rags-to-riches empire collapsed, the *Indie*'s indescribablyambitious City correspondent Jason Nissé and his girlfriend were on holiday in Turkey as guests of the Polly Peck chairman.

Nissé had kept the all-expenses-paid trip secret from colleagues at City Road because it clearly breached Sir Andreas Whittam Strobe's famous "no freebies" policy. But with Polly Peck collapsing about him, he phoned the newsdesk from Turkey offering to write the inside story. When asked how he came to be in such a privileged position, Nissé owned up — thinking the strength of his story would outweigh his little misdemeanour.

It didn't. Upon his return Nissé was dragged before the ex-saintly Strobes, stripped of his title and ordered to pay back Nadir to the last Turkish lira. Polly Peck's liquidators have told the *Indescribablyboring* they would rather a donation was made to charity in return for the trip. But Strobes insists they be paid.

ROGER ALTON, *Grauniad* arts editor and former paramour of such formidable females as Carol Thatcher and Jaci Stephen, was dragged ignominiously through the small claims court recently at the insistence of fellow *Grauniad* hack Chris Cheers, a sports sub-editor.

The court hearing arose out of an incident in the newspaper's car park in April 1989 when Alton found his path blocked by a bicycle. In a fit of anger he hurled the object to one side, causing some minor damage to Cheers's motorcycle. Alton denied all knowledge of the incident and refused to offer compensation, so Cheers decided to take legal action.

When Alton turned up 10 minutes late for the hearing at Clerkenwell court, he accidentally knocked over a heavy metal ashtray stand. "Hmmm," said the registrar, "so that's Mr Alton, is it?"

Alton persisted in denying all knowledge of the flying bicycle and grudgingly offered to pay an appropriate sum to a biker's charity before he was reminded that the plaintiff had the right to speak first. Cheers was awarded damages against Alton of £75, plus costs of £25.

IT IS HEARTENING to learn that the *Observer*, now celebrating its bicentenary with much self-congratulation, is still maintaining the highest standards of journalistic probity.

In its issue of 23 December, most of one foreign page was given over to a long report by the paper's executive editor, Adam Raphael, on his recent trip to Israel. Though his visit coincided with the third anniversary of the *intifada*, the Palestinian uprising, there was no mention of this awkward subject. Instead, he wrote a sympathetic article about how the Israeli government was coping with the flood of Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union.

What he did not reveal was that his trip was organised and paid for by the British-Israel Public Affairs Committee, a PR outfit which works tirelessly to persuade hacks to see a more "positive" side to Israel. BIPAC suggested the subject of Raphael's article and arranged his entire programme for him.

Presumably Raphael's editor, Donald "Busy" Trelford, knew and approved of this propaganda stunt.

AS THE *New Statesman* staggers from crisis to crisis, it has appointed an improbable new chairman to inspire confidence among investors — Duncan "Dunky" Campbell.

Of rather more interest, however, is the departure of the previous chairman, ex-Labour MP and TV producer Phillip Whitehead, who again managed to escape unscathed from the scene of a disaster over which he has presided.

He was on the Goldcrest board during the film company's deepest troubles. As chairman of both the *New Statesman* and *New Society* boards, and then the merged board, he was associated with repeated financial débacles. On the principle that someone else must be to blame, he has seen off four editors in his five years in the chair — Paul Barker and David Lipsey at *New Society*, Hugh Stephenson at the *New Statesman* and now Stuart Weir at the merged mag. *New Statesman and Society* is currently on its second acting editor in a month.

Weir, the last editor, may have had his drawbacks; but he did at least resist the pressure to print plugs for Labour Party policy. The first sign of his departure was a long article by shadow chancellor John Smith on how Labour would "rescue" the British economy.

In 13 years as a Labour backbencher, Whitehead never had a taste of government office. Now, as an ardent Kinnockite, he sniffs power. It is believed that Kinnock wanted him to bring the increasingly paltry *New Stoadsperson* into line.

Whitehead has now surfaced as chairman of the board of the Consumers' Association. Judging by his past record, *Which?* magazine may soon be heading for the knackers' yard.

HOW THEY ARE RELATED

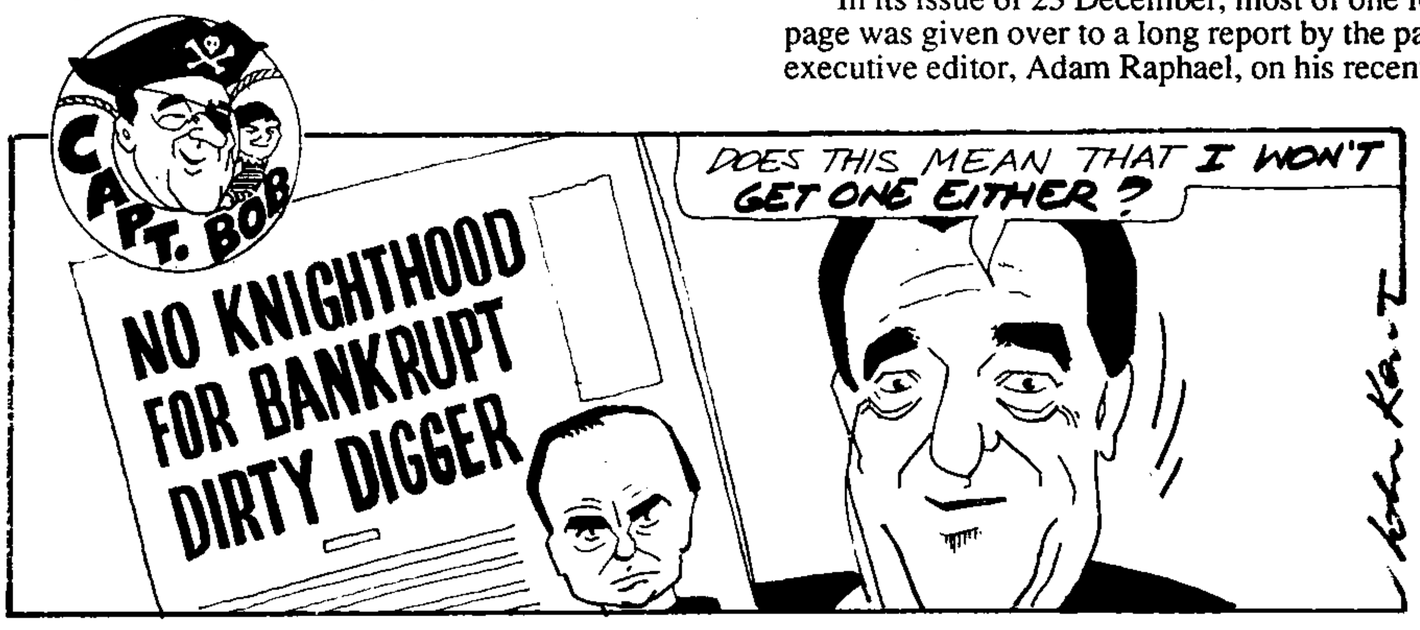
CHRISTMAS and new year are a desperate time for hacks. How to fill all those hectares of space when nothing is happening?

This season's special prize for ingenuity goes to *Daily Telegraph* hackette Cassandra Jardine, who wrote an article proposing "conversational gambits" for Christmas parties. If discussing the TV series *House of Cards*, she suggested, *Telegraph* readers could ask: "Why didn't the girl with sleepy eyes go off with that nice journalist, played by the up-and-coming William Chubb?" Strangely, Jardine forgot to mention that William Chubb is her husband.

Runner-up is Linda Grant, a feature-writer for the *Listener* (RIP), who wrote a charming piece for the *Sindie's* "Real Life" page about a nice woman called Susan Jeffreys who goes carol-singing in Crouch End every Christmas. Again, one small but salient fact was somehow omitted: Susan Jeffreys is (or was until last week, at any rate) the features editor of the *Listener* — Linda Grant's boss, in other words.

Over at the *Sunset Times*, the ubiquitous Prof Norman Stone filled his column with a hymn of praise to the "independent" report by Brigadier Cowgill and Christopher Booker on the great Cossack affair. What *Sunset Times* readers may not know is that Stone's wife, Christine Verity, was formerly Mrs Christopher Booker.

Finally, a special commendation to Max "Hitler" Hastings, editor-in-chief of the *Telegraph* newspapers. Over the festive season his Sunday paper ran interminable extracts from a new book on gardening by Anne Scott-James, written in the form of a "letter" to Scott-James's daughter — an absurd gimmick, since Scott-James lives next door to her daughter. The *Telegraph* neglected to mention one other small point: Anne Scott-James is Max Hastings's mother.



British Briefing: The Smear Test

THE SUDDEN emergence into the light (thanks to Granada's *World in Action*) of the secret smear-sheet *British Briefing* has caused all sorts of dismay at the headquarters of MI5. Senior officers there hope that no one will start making links between the smear-sheet and the alleged attempt to unsettle the Wilson government in the 1970s by its own intelligence services.

The editor of *British Briefing* and its fore-runner, *Background Briefing on Subversion*, is Charles Elwell, a fanatical anti-Communist who spent most of his working life in MI5. Elwell was involved in routine anti-Russian work until he was appointed head of the new F Branch in 1973. F Branch's purpose (much more important than tracking down Russian spies) was to track down "the enemy within": that is, people in Britain who were "subversive" in their own right because what they said, wrote or believed was, in the view of Elwell and his colleagues, a threat to the state.

In his book *The Wilson Plot*, David Leigh explains: "F Branch was king. Money was poured into it, and officers who had cut their teeth on robust operations against the Soviet Union and its spies were transferred into the much more delicate field of 'domestic' work."

Buggers

The brightest and best of MI5 — John Jones, David Ransom, John Woodruffe, Keith Thomas, Michael McCaul — were moved over to F Branch. Their patriotic expertise in bugging and burgling, which had been used indiscriminately against Russian spies, was now turned equally indiscriminately on British university students, leading members of the National Union of Mineworkers and so on. The operation worked side by side with the successful capture by MI5 of control of intelligence operations in Northern Ireland (until then the exclusive province of MI6).

F Branch was the source of the information provided to the new unit set up in Northern Ireland called Information Policy. Much of it has been published by the former army information officer Colin Wallace, who was instructed to put together a project called Clockwork Orange in which information was to be collected and disseminated to the disadvantage of terrorists. Wallace refused to have anything more to do with the project when he found that its targets were not terrorists but politicians in all parties, especially the Labour Party, who were alleged to be Communists or subversives or both.

Crazier and Crozier

The work of F Branch was supplemented by another organisation which formed itself in the mid-1970s, The Institute for the Study of Conflict. At the head of this was Elwell's friend, another fanatical anti-Communist called Brian Crozier. The work of the institute was dramatically exposed in 1975 when a huge bundle of confidential documents arrived at the offices of various publications such as *Time Out* and *Socialist Worker*.

The documents provided proof that the institute was, for instance, supplying speakers on "internal subversion" to the Police training college at Bramshill, and working closely not only with MI5 but also with a new group of ultra-right wing campaigners, Tory Action, whose chief was the former MI6 deputy director and hard-line racialist George Kennedy Young, and whose aim was the replacement of Edward Heath as leader of the Tory Party with his challenger, Margaret Thatcher.

The new fashion in MI5 for "targeting" British citizens and their views rather than Russian spies left the old Russian-hunters out in the cold. Peter Wright, as Leigh explains in his book, became a "dinosaur". The dinosaurs amused themselves with the fatuous obsession that Roger Hollis, head of MI5 and/or his deputy Graham Mitchell were Russian agents. F Branch had no time for this nonsense. They cold-shouldered Wright and ignored him.

Wright's own account in *Spycatcher* of what happened in early 1974 is notable chiefly for its author's surprise that he should have been involved. He writes: "The plan was simple. In the run-up to the election... MI5 would arrange for selective details of the intelligence about leading Labour Party figures, but especially Wilson, to be leaked to sympathetic pressmen. Using our contacts in the press and among union officials, word of the material contained in MI5 files and the fact that Wilson was considered a security risk would be passed round." Wright says that "up to thirty officers" had approved the scheme.

Brief lies

"But why do you need me?" he asked. They replied that they wanted the files linking Wilson to Russia (to which Wright, but not F Branch, had access). Wright says, rather disingenuously, that he refused to produce them. But strange smears about Labour ministers, including Wilson, started to appear in the press in early 1974 and continued to do so all through that year. Colin Wallace was one conduit — but there were several others.

Elwell retired from MI5 when the Tories won the election in 1979. He contented himself for a few months writing letters to the press distancing himself from the "revelations" of Chapman Pincher (which originated from Peter Wright and Lord Rothschild) about Russian penetration at the head of MI5. But in 1981, as the Tories drooped in the polls, Elwell got together with his old chum Brian Crozier and discussed plans for a new, highly secret anti-Communist smear-sheet to be circulated to trustworthy journalists, civil servants, army and police officers, among others, raising once more the bogey of links between Labour leaders and Communism. Thus was born *Background Briefing on Subversion* and its successor, *British Briefing*.

Fellow Travellers' Club

The publication, in its own words, "will not necessarily be available on request and is not available by subscription. Those on the receiving list are asked to treat this publication as confidential". Its contents were in almost exactly the same style and format as similar smears circulated in 1974. Passages in it read exactly like Colin Wallace's notes for Clockwork Orange. Sometimes, perhaps from nostalgia, but more probably because the entire "Communist threat" was disintegrating in front of his eyes, Elwell would comfort himself by digging out his old smears and publishing them once more.

Stan Newens, a Labour MP in the 1960s and 1970s, was a target in Clockwork Orange for his links with the fellow-travelling political committee of the London Co-Operative Party. The poor old London Co-Op Party has long since lost any influence or relevance, but a recent issue of *British Briefing* devotes a whole feature to it — quoting liberally from the now ageing and super-moderate Stan Newens (who lost his seat in Parliament in 1979, and is now a little-known MEP).

The more the Communist Party vanished, the more *British Briefing* tried to revive it. Labour MPs Brian Gould, the late Norman Buchan, Paul Flynn; journalist Isobel Hilton; broadcaster Melvyn Bragg and even Tory MPs like John Biffen were smeared with alleged Communist connections. Either they had written for *Marxism Today*, or they had agreed to be interviewed by someone who used to be a member of the Communist Party or, like poor old Stan Newens, they sat on fellow-travelling committees two decades ago. Their real crime, however, was that they had been opposed to Margaret Thatcher.

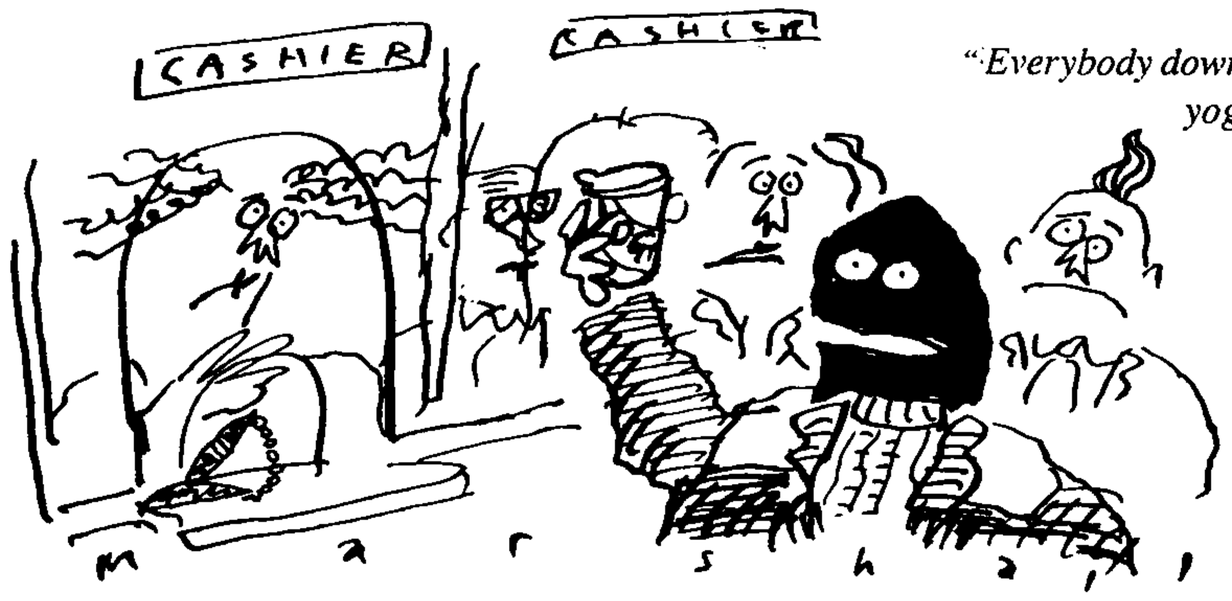
The central theme of *British Briefing* is the smearing of what it calls the "anti-Thatcher alliance" which extends far outside the Labour and Communist parties. *British Briefing* swipes at everything — charities like Shelter and the Child Poverty Action Group; anti-Official Secrets Act campaigner, Tory MP Richard Shepherd, even the long-dead American novelist B. Traven — everything and everyone who has dared to speak out or be used against Margaret Thatcher.

The crypto-factor

Just like the former Tory Action chairman G.K. Young, *British Briefing* stands four square with Thatcher against all her enemies — without, but especially within. There is a strange way in which what appeared in *British Briefing* one month would appear not long afterwards in Mrs Thatcher's own statements. Thus one issue sets out to smear Neil Kinnock as a "crypto-Communist", the exact phrase which Mrs Thatcher herself used only a few weeks ago in the House of Commons while denouncing Kinnock. The pendulum often swung the other way, too. Thatcher's own attack on charities led by left-wingers was followed very quickly with a long article on the subject in *British Briefing*.

No wonder, when the smear-sheet needed revamping and a new, more energetic publisher was required, that the ever-ready David Hart stepped so smartly forward and sought funding from so influential a source as the owner of the *Times* and the *Sun*, Rupert Murdoch.

Now that Thatcher has gone, will Hart, Crozier, Elwell and Co finally disappear for ever? Not apparently so. For when Mrs Thatcher consulted urgently about her successor, no advice was more important to her than that of Hart, Elwell and her old buddies in MI5. They recommend Major as the prime minister least likely to interfere with MI5.



"Everybody down! This yoghurt's live!"

O.B.N.

But for the Queen herself I feel nothing but admiration. For nearly 40 years she has played her role with the utmost dedication and self-discipline, and her reassuring presence has never been more welcome than it is today as the nation wrestles with the loss of its former nanny in Downing Street.

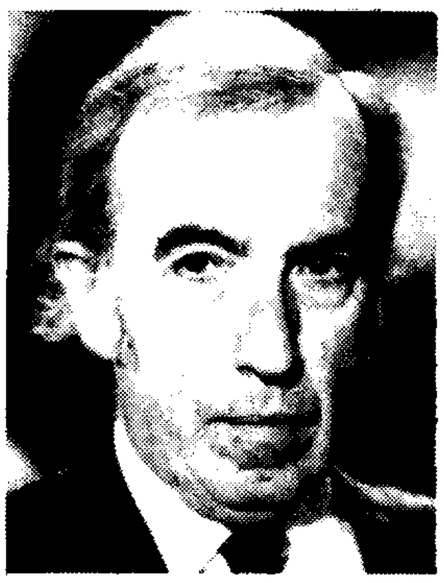
ALEXANDER CHANCELLOR
Independent Magazine

I have always had the most profound respect for Lord Denning and, like most people, I consider him to be one of the very finest judges of this century. That respect and my personal affection remain undiminished, and his lifetime of achievements will continue to speak for itself.

A.N. WILSON
The Spectator

Submitted by E. Strobes.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.



LORD ST JOHN OF FAWSLEY SPECIAL

LORD St John of Fawsley is well known as a man of many parts — friend of the Queen Mum, collector of Queen Victoria's underpants, confirmed bachelor and genuflector, connoisseur of fine arts. Now he has revealed a hitherto secret talent as a builder and property developer.

This has come about because Kettering council, in Northamptonshire, decided last year that it wanted to create a "new village". Eight firms applied for the job. Seven were substantial limited companies with millions of pounds at their disposal — Rockingham Estates, the Prudential, Lovell Homes and suchlike. But the eighth bidder was a surprise: Stock Land and Estates (SLE), an obscure outfit with a total share capital of £100. Records at Companies House suggested that SLE was not hugely solvent: the balance sheet on its 1989 accounts showed that liabilities exceeded assets by £601,196 — SLE, in other words, was heavily in debt.

The file at Companies House also identified the directors of this little enterprise: Sir John Carter, a businessman from the village of Stock in Essex (hence the company name), and a couple of relations of his — plus two Tory politicians, Sir Hugh Rossi and milord St John of Fawsley. (Amusingly, in St John's entry on the register, the section for "Previous Name" is marked "Not Available". Can he really have forgotten so soon that he was once Norman St John Stevarse, a humble commoner?)

Each of the companies tendering for the "new village" chose a different site in the Kettering area for its planned development. One, for instance, decided to build it on a disused airfield. But SLE picked a patch of virgin land between the villages of Cransley and Loddington. Environmentally, this could hardly have been worse: it adjoined a site of special scientific interest; it would also create traffic jams in the narrow country lanes nearby.

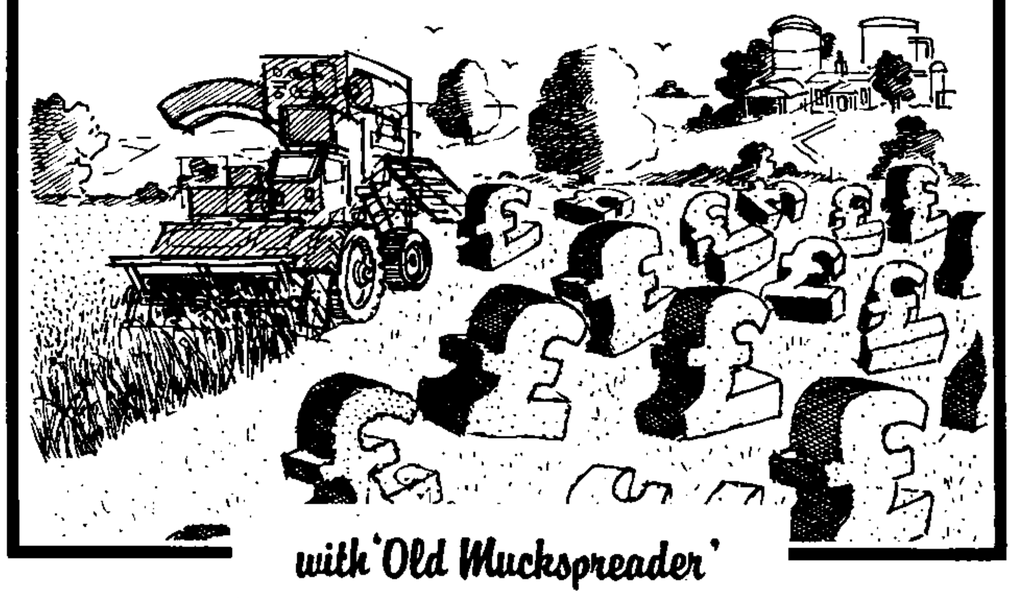
In June, when council officials assessed the competing schemes under various headings — architectural quality, "environmental impact", nearness to schools, etc — SLE's proposed village, to be called Cransley Lodge, came out bottom on almost every count. In spite of a moving personal plea from Stevarse ("I welcome the opportunity to endorse and be part of the creatively satisfying task of planning and implementing a new village") it seemed that his career in the cottage-building industry had been abruptly ended.

But then the council moved the goalposts. Previously it had asked for a village of up to 750 houses. Now, for no very obvious reason, it decided that 350 would be a better size. There was no time for the bidders to draw up new schemes. Fortunately, however, one of them had already envisaged 350 houses in its original plan — Stock and Land Estates aka Lord St John of Fawsley and his merry hod-carriers. Even though his scheme received the most objections from the public, and was judged the "least acceptable" by the council itself only a few months earlier, he has now been declared the winner.

Residents of Loddington, one of the two villages nearest to "Cransley Lodge", do not seem overjoyed. "We were all to be consulted on this local plan but the information has been totally ignored," one complained to the local paper. Loddington parish council has also come out against the plan.

In the other neighbouring village, Cransley, opposition has been more muted. This is not entirely surprising. The architects hired by Stevas & Co to design the "new village" are Michael and Philip Wilkinson, who run a local practice. And who is the chairman of Cransley parish council? The selfsame Philip Wilkinson.

DOWN ON THE FARM



with 'Old Muckspreader'

THE FARMERS' Union of Wales (FUW) — known for its shrill cry of "More subsidies, more subsidies, look you!" — has launched an extraordinary attack on New Zealand lamb producers.

The Kiwis had the nerve to research consumer attitudes to lamb. Apparently the average British meat eater now regards his own farmers as money-grubbing despoilers motivated chiefly by profit. New Zealand farmers, by contrast, are seen as pure and untainted, rearing sheep naturally and not stuffing them full of antibiotics and recycled animal proteins.

This market research has incensed the boyos. FUW president H.R.M. Hughes has muttered darkly about third country suppliers expanding their market share with "thinly veiled criticism" of UK producers. He added menacingly: "Many sheep producers believe New Zealand imports should be reduced or phased out altogether."

It's all sour grapes, of course; Welsh farmers have never believed in talking to their customers. They are convinced that they have an absolute right to cover the hills with sheep and then have the taxpayer come and take them away. They even balk at coughing up a paltry 4p an animal for a promotion fund. Now they are livid because the kiwis, who receive no subsidies at all, have had the gall to find out what their customers actually want to eat.

It may well be that Welsh lamb is as pure and untainted as New Zealand meat — but no one's ever going to know.

THE MINISTRY of Overproduction, having subjected its long-suffering advisory staff to years of penny-pinching and threats of privatisation, now appears determined to rob them of their savings.

MAFF farm advisers are obliged to sell up and move around the country when called upon to do so by their bosses. This is part of their terms of employment; but in 1988/89 the dozens who dutifully obeyed the diktats of Whitehall Place were caught by the housing market collapse.

Having put their own homes up for sale, the hapless advisers bought property in the new locations as directed by MAFF.

The ministry agreed to finance the necessary bridging loans; but when the property market suddenly fell, effectively wiping thousands of pounds off their savings, the Government didn't want to know. As a result of the losses — many of which are £50,000 or more — families have been put under severe stress and some have broken up.

MAFF appears to have accepted some moral responsibility for the debacle (after all, it was the ministry who told the staff to move); but the Treasury is refusing to cough up compensation. The Whitehall hoarders say they cannot be held responsible for the vagaries of the housing market — and the word is that the ruling comes from Downing Street.

WHY IS the troubled Vegetarian Society trying so hard to rid itself of veteran campaigner Alan Long? While he was picking up the prestigious Caroline Walker award for his dedication to "the improvement of public health by means of good food", society chiefs were trying to unseat him from the committee to which members had just elected him.

Perhaps it is because of his allegations of mismanagement, financial losses and the bestowing of dodgy approbations on commercial products. There is no disputing that in a year when staff salaries rose by 30 per cent, the society's adult membership has actually been falling — despite an unprecedented interest in all things vegetarian — to a paltry 16,000 or so.

Members of the society's research section are so incensed by developments that they have complained to the Charity Commissioners. They believe it is about time elections were run by an impartial body like the Electoral Reform Society — and Old Muck has to agree with them.

"Young gnomes today! No respect..."

PETER MORRISON, knighted in Mrs Thatcher's bye-bye honours list, must be thanking his lucky stars that he changed jobs when he did.

The fat man became Mrs Thatcher's parliamentary private secretary in July 1990, having spent his three previous years as energy minister with responsibility for oil telling the world of the wonderful things the oil companies were doing in the North Sea.

He was minister on the day the rig Piper Alpha exploded and after the disaster announced his approval of Occidental's plan to redevelop the Piper field. "It is clear to me that Occidental are giving safety the highest priority," he said.

Luckily for Morrison, when the extremely critical Cullen report was published recently, it fell to his successor, Colin Moynihan, to field questions on oil safety. If Morrison had not been sidemoted to the job of prime ministerial PPS, he would have been expected to explain the slack regime over which he presided. Instead, he was able to read about the report in the comfort of Downing Street — before driving to the palace to be rewarded for services to the nation.

A HIGH COURT action can concentrate the mind wonderfully — as Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley *et al* showed recently when considering the Small Heath selection battle raging in Birmingham (see *Eyes passim*).

The fight is over who should succeed Denis Howell, who retires at the next general election. So far the national party has turned a blind eye to the allegations of blatant vote-rigging and cynical manipulation by the union bosses who have always controlled one of Britain's safest seats.

The candidates are Roger Godsiff, London-based political organiser for the GMB union, and three city councillors: Muhammad Afzal, Najma Hafeez and Stewart Stacey. The GMB has already had to withdraw several delegates from the selection committee after its officers had "somehow" massively over-represented their membership in the constituency.

The EETPU, which also supports Godsiff, faces similar allegations; but local organiser John Speller refused to withdraw his delegate list and his delegates took part in the final ballot. The voting papers are now locked in a solicitor's safe awaiting a decision by the party's national executive committee on the validity of the EETPU delegates.

National organiser Joyce Gould wrote a report to the NEC recommending the EETPU delegates be accepted and the vote counted, which would have meant a Godsiff victory. What she failed to consider fully was a high court writ issued by the Birmingham branch of the South East Co-Operative party, which covers three city constituencies including Small Heath and Hattersley's own Sparkbrook.

It sends delegates to all three constituencies and the whole branch has always decided who its delegates vote for — a system which has brought valuable outside support into Hattersley's own Asian-dominated Sparkbrook party.

Just before the Small Heath ballot the Co-op's regional organiser, Adrian Bailey, decided to reinterpret the whole rule book. He told the branch only its Small Heath members could instruct delegates. It meant all the Co-op votes would go to Godsiff, whose support was strong in Small Heath but not in the two other constituencies.

Co-op party officers, led by Andrew Lydon, promptly issued a writ challenging Bailey's radical reinterpretation of the rules. A hearing could take months and if it went against Bailey, would mean whoever had been selected having to stand down.

But Bailey's biggest mistake was to forget that Hattersley would not be keen on any move that might cut his support. At the NEC a furious Hattersley demanded that Gould's report be rejected and a full inquiry held. Eddie Haigh of the T&G has now been sent to Brum to sort out the mess with instructions to report back to the NEC on 21 January.

'Backbiter'

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

FILIPO PANDOLFI, vice-president of the all-powerful, unelected European Commission, has been caught being economical with the truth by the normally mouse-like European Parliament and is being summoned to appear before MEPs to explain himself.

Pandolfi, who has special responsibility for research and science, had been asked about the European Community's failure to invest in wave energy. He replied that a study which the community had commissioned had "confirmed that it would have been premature".

That probably seemed an easy answer to avoid trouble: the study was highly technical and it was safe to assume that the MEPs would know nothing about it. However, one of them knew a man who did.

The study, by Dr Tony Lewis, oceanographer and maritime civil engineer at Cork University, was published in 1985 in London and Brussels and its conclusion was just the opposite. It reported that the community could obtain 85 percent of its electricity from wave power — a highly disagreeable fact to the nuclear lobby — and it suggested a four-year programme of research running from 1985 to 1989 and costing a meagre 13.7 million ecus (£9.5 million). The recommendation, and the programme, were quietly buried.

The MEP who asked the original question, Llewellyn Smith (SE Wales), is now in hot pursuit of the commission. With the support of socialist MEPs he has tabled a resolution denouncing Pandolfi's reply as misleading and calling on the commission to implement the Lewis recommendations. It will be debated this month and Pandolfi is expected to appear before Parliament to explain what he was talking about.

In Britain wave energy experts know that the European Community has been under heavy pressure from Harwell, the home of the UK Atomic Energy Authority. There the British nukes are in charge of research into alternative energy sources and it was they who supervised and then crushed the British wave energy programme. They are desperate to head off any renewed British government investment in wave power, a prime threat to their continuing effort to capture big money to resurrect nuclear development.

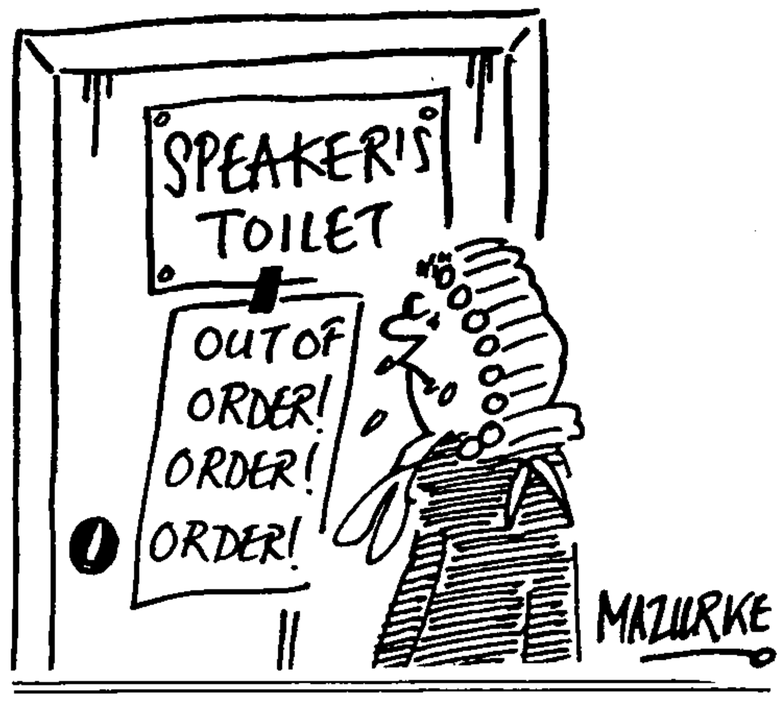
They would hate to see the EC going ahead where Britain pulled back. Dr Roger Price, head of wave power at Harwell, told the EC in a private presentation last year that "in no scenario was large-scale offshore wave energy likely to become economic." His statement aroused fury among wave energy researchers who distrust both his costings and his views.

DEFENCE NEWS

DEFENCE secretary Tom King had to choose his words carefully when answering a recent parliamentary question on Britain's ability to maintain a continuous independent nuclear deterrent.

King stated in December that it was "our determination" to provide a round-the-clock capability. He would have been only too aware that as he uttered the words Britain had no deterrent.

The British nuclear threat is preserved by one of



the Royal Navy's four Polaris submarines being on station (somewhere in the Arctic Circle) and ready to fire its missiles at any one time. Each sub stays on patrol for up to three months, and it takes about two weeks for a vessel to be ready on station from the time it leaves port.

Two days before King made his statement to the House of Commons, HMS Revenge left the Coulport weapons base to go on patrol. HMS Resolution, the boat it was supposed to be replacing came in *12 hours later*.

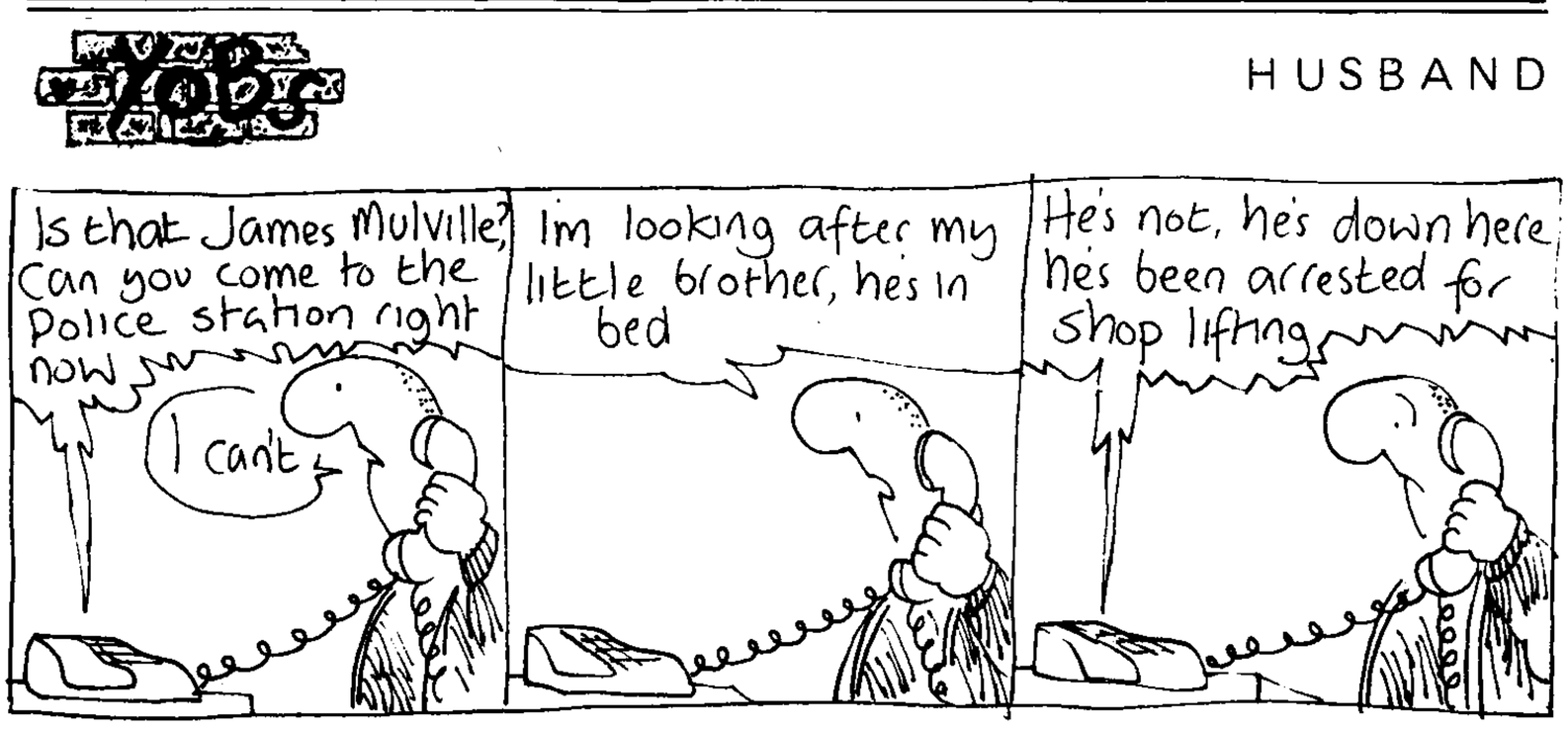
The cause of this striking departure from normal procedure was the cracking that has appeared in the reactors of the RN's early nuclear subs, including the four Polaris vessels (see *Eyes passim*). While the defence ministry will not disclose any details, the problem has led it to take all five of its first-generation hunter killer subs out of service — including one on which it had just spent £100 million — and is now, not surprisingly, affecting the Polaris fleet.

HMS Renown, the Polaris sub currently undergoing a refit at the Rosyth naval yard, has clearly had cracks discovered on its reactor — its refit is now months overdue. Renown should have been the next vessel out on patrol after Resolution. However, its non-availability and that of the fourth Polaris boat HMS Repulse, which has spent only 10 weeks at sea in the last two years because of faults, meant that Revenge — the last vessel to return from patrol — had to be made ready to go out again. The delay meant that Resolution had to stay out for 15 weeks rather than the usual 10 or 12. Hence its rapid return once Revenge had finally left.

The UK could face a considerably longer period without a deterrent when Revenge returns in early March. The availability of a replacement will depend firstly on repairing the cracks on Renown in time and on Resolution passing an inspection.

According to John Large, a consultant who produced the recent report for Greenpeace on the RN's nuclear-powered submarines, the odds on either are not good. Rolls-Royce, the reactor manufacturer, has been trying to devise a repair technique for months. Its failure to come up with a solution by September led to the decision to scrap the hunter killers. On the other hand, Resolution is the oldest Polaris sub (commissioned in 1967/8) and the cracks are an age-related fault — steel becomes increasingly brittle over years of radiation bombardment.

With the first Trident sub unlikely to be operational before 1995, the British deterrent will — at best — probably be an intermittent threat in the near future.


Yobs
HUSBAND
Is that James Mulville? Can you come to the Police station right now
I can't
Im looking after my little brother, he's in bed
He's not, he's down here he's been arrested for shop lifting

Letters

Double Nelson

Sir,

According to Ulster News (Eye 757) Soldier N, the mysterious double agent at the centre of the Stevens investigation into security leaks to loyalists, was unmasked in the Irish News as "almost certainly Brian Nelson", the UDA's former chief intelligence collator.

This is exceedingly strange because these words (along with the revelations that Nelson was first seized at SAS headquarters in Hereford and that the army paid for his house and car) were, in fact, made in the Sunday News of 16 December.

Do you think these two stories are by any chance related? I think we should be told.

Yours revealingly,
PAUL CONNOLLY,

Deputy Editor, Sunday News, Belfast.

Lookalike

Hart **Lucan**

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the astonishing resemblance between wealthy landowner David Hart and the long-lost relative of the Queen, Lord Lucan? I wonder, could they by any chance be related?

Yours,
ENA B. MAXWELL,

Headington Hall, Oxon.

High dudgeon

Sir,

I've read and enjoyed the Eye for the better part of 20 years. However, with the inclusion of the advertisement (The Ultimate Legal High) in the Christmas edition, I have now joined the ranks of ex-readers.

What on earth are you thinking of to allow such an advert to appear?!

Yours in sorrow,
DEREK MERCER,

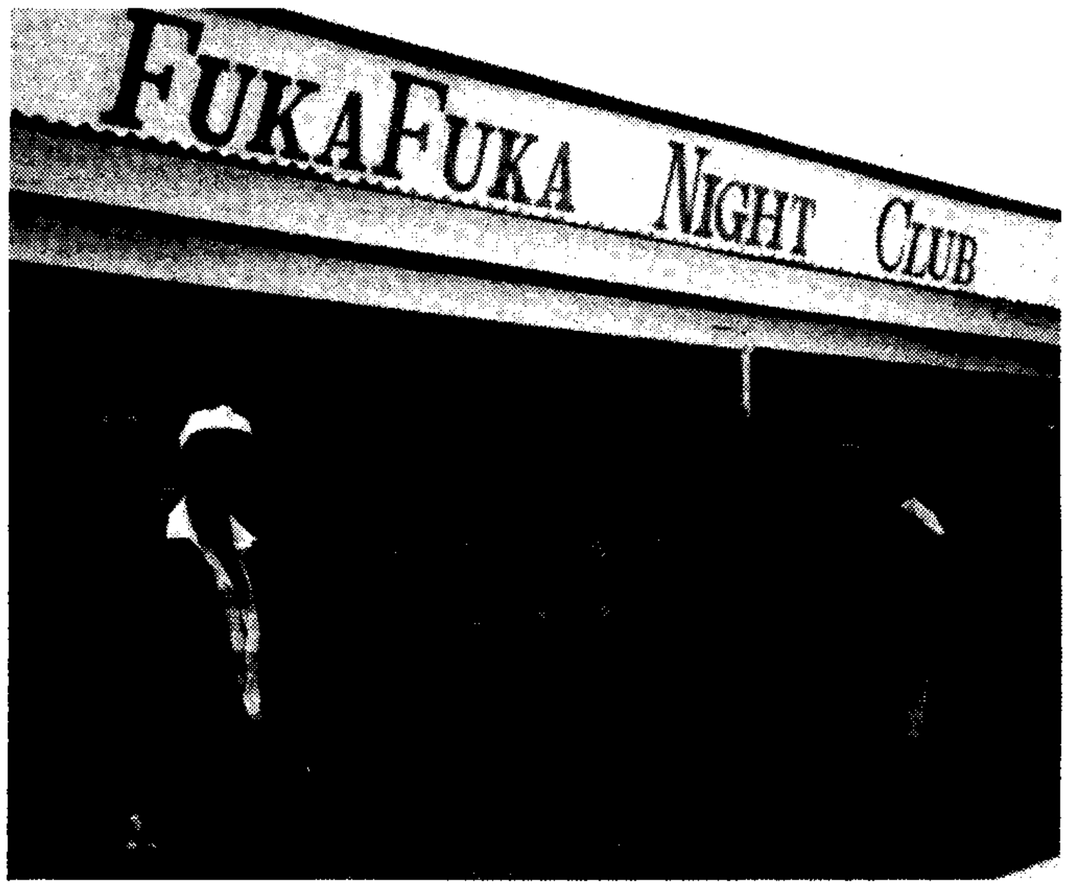
Accrington, Lancs.

Nowhere man

Sir,

Have any of your readers noticed that "JOHN OR" is not an anagram of anything?

Yours faithfully,
PETER MILNE,



I-SPY

Mzuzu, northern Malawi

Submitted by Stephen Thomas. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Pratt-fall

Sir,

As the past decade draws to a close, it is perhaps timely to recall the fateful warning issued to your organ by my compatriot, Mr Nigel Pratt-Dumpster.

In The Spectator (25/10/86), Mr Pratt-Dumpster wrote that: "... there are those, myself included, who believe that the Eye is in an irreversible decline and will not last out the decade".

May you continue to profit from the next ten years, in repose.

Yours, etc,
ANDREW SCHOLL,

Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney, Australia.

Nose job

Sir,

I am quite surprised that you saw fit to insult Miss Cilla Black by awarding her your Order of the Brown Nose (Eye 757). She was being honest in her remarks concerning the late Mrs Thatcher. Cilla had met the departed lady and she was giving a forthright opinion that she believed that the ex-performer was funny. I appreciate that the great majority had to suffer silently while the good lady had top billing and were unable to see the joke.

With her limited talent I can understand Cilla's reluctance to want to follow anyone on a variety bill and especially to follow the fallen star. Cilla's last remark should have received your plaudits for its modesty. Isn't everyone capable of singing better than she does?

Best wishes,
JOHN THOMPSON,

Newport, Gwent.

Essex Man

Sir,

The letter you published about me in the last issue was quite wrong.

I purchased my house in 1976 from two ladies who retired to the South Coast and not from the council. Facts that can be verified.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL DANVERS,

Harlow, Essex.

PS: I wouldn't mind a glass house as well.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"...and Shaun Edwards — happy memories of Wembley; on his last appearance here he received a fractured cheek-bone."

RAY FRENCH, BBC1
(Graeme Tully)

"If you think of the other hostages — you take Terry Waite and Paul McCartney — their families have behaved impeccably."

SIR JOHN STOKES, BBC Radio WM
(Ed Doolan)

"I think if he knocked the man out cold the referee would have to step in and stop it."

JIM WATT, BBC1
(M.J. Kenward)

"That was the inimitable Edith Piaf. Can anybody else sing like her?"

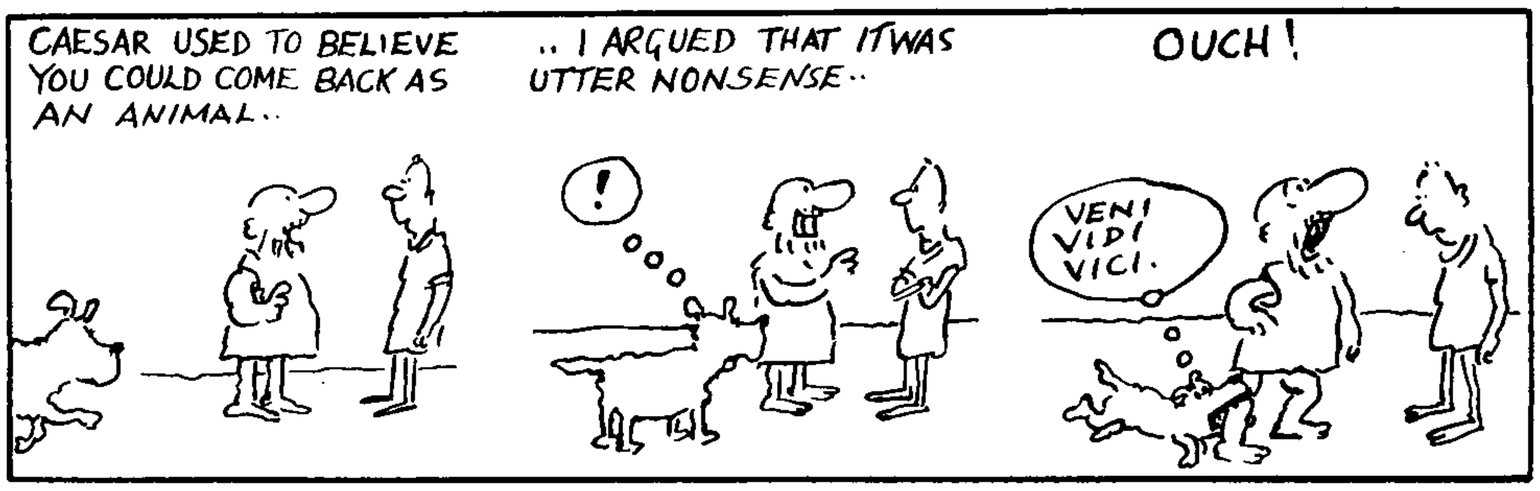
NIGEL DEMPSTER, Radio 2
(B. Armstrong)

"Mr Bush is the first living US president to visit Czechoslovakia."

Voice of America Editorial
(James Munnick)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



1990 BORE OF THE YEAR AWARDS

OUTBREAK OF WAR MARS DESERT AWARDS CEREMONY

by Our Bores Staff
Sandy Gall, Sandy Shore, Georges Sand, Duncan Sandys, Sarah Sands, George Sanders, Colonel Sanders, Ernest Saunders and **Aristotle Oasis**

HUGE sandstorms of the type that will soon be commonplace in Britain thanks to global warming threatened to disrupt the 1990 Bores of the Year award ceremony, which this year was staged "somewhere on the Saudi-Kuwaiti border". The exact location was kept secret from guests for security reasons, which may account for the unusually poor turnout.

Such guests as did arrive were instructed to join a queuing system based on that devised for the Monet Exhibition at the Royal Academy. After several hours, those in the Blue Queue joined the tail-end of the Red Queue to obtain advance tickets qualifying them to join the Green Queue, which led into the huge metal cylinder where the ceremony was to be held. This had been specially flown out from Britain by the well-known Birmingham garden equipment centre, Hugegun & Longbarrel plc.

As guests donned special NBC protective suits, **Mr Emmanuel Strobes** warned them that, in deference to their Saudi hosts, who had kindly provided the desert venue for the occasion, certain traditional features of the ceremony would have to be omitted on pain of death — namely the consumption of alcohol, the singing of Christmas carols (except *Jingle Bells*) and the use of Christian names.

As the sun beat down in a temperature of 160°, Mr Strobes then handed over the microphone to a familiar figure in a battered herringbone overcoat, **Mr John "Hondootedly" Cole**, to explain the complicated balloting system whereby the winner of this year's coveted "Bore of the Year" award had been chosen.

His four-hour exposition was itself given a special Peter Jenkins Award for Political Boredom as guests patiently waited for the result of the third ballot.

Finally Mr Cole announced the result, which was as follows:

Mr Paul "Gazza" Gascoigne	126 votes
Mr Julian Critchley	108 votes
Mr John Major	93 votes

By the rules of procedure laid down by the 1922 Committee, Mr John Major was duly elected.

At this announcement, Mr Paul Gascoigne burst into tears, while over the tannoy a fat Italian person with a beard sang his platinum-disc-winning hit *Nissan Dormobile*. Mr Gascoigne was then presented by **Mr Melvyn Barg**, author of *The Love Romps of a Cumbrian Bank Manager*, with a consolation cheque for £1 million from the manufacturers of the well-known men's shaving lotion Brut Anderson Formerly Of The *Sunday Telegraph* — 'Drives Women Out Of The Room'.

As the guests burst into spontaneous sleep, the insignificant figure of the Prime Minister and now Bore of the Year strode forward to read out a prepared speech about the need for Britain to become a classless and caring society in the 1990s.

A.S. Byatt

HOURS later the guests were awoken by the excited figure of **Sir David Attenbore** standing knee-deep in sand announcing the discovery of a totally new species of Desert Ant.

"Although utterly blind and with no limbs at all, this ant travels millions of miles every year to appear on my programme," he explained in his well-loved breathy tones.

The distinguished zoologist continued to deliver a detailed account of the mating habits of **Mr and Mrs Michael Jagger** until he was interrupted by Mr Strobes, who invited **Mr Ned Twinky** to read out a number of "jokes", specially written by a team of scriptwriters headed by **Mr Neil Shand**, the celebrated presenter of Radio 4's *Fag Ends*. He then introduced **Miss Carla Lane**, representing the cast of the *Bread* television situation comedy weekly serial, who opened the buff envelope containing the nominees for this year's "Group Bore Award".

As guests sipped their non-alcoholic Benzine-Enriched Perrier Worsthorne Water ("Terrific Eau-ld Bore — Takes The Fizz Out Of Life"), the doyenne of Scouse humour read out the following names: the **Guinness Four** and their gorgeous leggy wives and daughters *(as seen on TV)*; the entire staff of the *Independent* newspaper; the members of the Brigadier Cowgill Patent Home-Made Committee Of Enquiry Into The Strange Case Of The 600,000 Vanishing Red-Bearded Cossacks; and Messrs **Adam Raffaello, Michaelignatieffo, Leonardo da Bernstein** and **Madonnatello**.

To loud snores, she named the New York Turtle Folk as the popular winners, and they duly sprang onto the stage to receive a guaranteed BSE-free Pizza Burger from **Mr John Selwyn Gummer**, who had himself been in the running for the award as part of the Church of England General Synod Team.

With a cry of "Madcowabungler!" (believed to be a reference to the Minister of Agriculture) the turtles ingested the hideous food and died an excruciatingly painful death, as weeping high street retailers called in the receivers.

Sir Harrison Birtwistle

GUESTS then sat back to be regaled by a live satellite-link broadcast direct from the Kremlin, showing thousands of bored-looking men sitting in a large hall while **President Gorbachev** awarded himself sweeping new total democratic powers to combat the ever-growing crisis of himself. These included the right to open the envelope containing the name of the winner of the "Newcomer Bore of the Year".

"Comrades," announced the Supreme Ruler of the Post-Thatch Universe, "it has been a close-run contest with a very high standard of entry. First there is that chap with the moustache who reads out Saddam Hussein's speeches on Iraqi television. Second there is your own very wonderful new Archbishop of Canterbury, **Bishop Julian Clary**. But in the opinion of the Supreme Soviet, i.e. your old chum Gorby, we salute as Hero of Boredom

First Class, TV's own **Mr Charles Moore**!"

The dapper-suited deputy editor of the *Daily Telegraph* and star of innumerable *Newsnight* appearances stepped up to deliver a four-hour lecture on the virtues of Mrs Thatcher and the shocking way in which she had been betrayed by the pygmy-Judases of the Tory backbenches.

As TV's Mr Moore moved on to remind guests that this year was also the 550th anniversary of the founding of Eton, the ever-young **Mr Clifford Richard** performed selections from the soundtrack of *Twin Peaks*.

Peter Cole

AS flashing lights and klaxons warned of an impending gas attack, guests dug themselves into foxholes, clutching small plastic bags of Old King Fahd's Halal Sheep Nuggets and Mr Cat Stevens's No. 1 Camel Scratchings, to await the announcement of the winner of a special new "Lifetime Bore Award", jointly sponsored by Polly Peck, BSB and the *Sunday Correspondent* newspaper.

Mr Strobes called upon **Lord Rees-Mogg**, the much-loved and respected chairman of the British Board of Broadcasting Standards Commission ("No TV Tits Before Nine O'Clock"), who read out a long list of those who had given lifetime service to tedium.

A spotlight picked out each of the candidates in turn, as Lord Mogg intoned their names: "**Mr Clive James**, the Antipodean humorist and broadcaster, author of the celebrated autobiography *How I Whanged My Donger In The Kedgeree And Then Got To Cambridge*. **Mr Edward Heath**, whose generosity of spirit and capacity for self-mockery has inspired successive generations to years of ridicule. **Dr Jonathan Miller**, the celebrated polymath, whose six-part television documentary *The History of the Speech Defect* won the Canadian Golden Maple Leaf Award for documentaries about speech defects. **Mr Anthony Burgess**, whose autobiography *Gosh, Aren't I Brilliant?* was widely acclaimed by himself.

"Nevertheless," droned the now-recumbent figure of the distinguished antiquarian bookseller, "the first-ever winner of our Lifetime Achievement Award is **Sir Robin Day**."

At this momentous announcement, the bombastic and bowtied figure of the winner barged forward to complain that he had not been paid enough money to appear at the award ceremony and would therefore not be attending.

As Sir Robin stormed off to the Garrick Club in a tremendous bate, it was left to **Mr Peter Sissons** to stand in for him, receiving a life-size marble-style replica of the late Richard Dimblebore, flanked by his two sons Donald and Jeremy, specially sculpted by Dame Elizabeth Frink.

Mr Sissons then asked members of the audience what they thought about the community charge, the Core Curriculum, the proposed reforms of the National Health Service, and whether they thought that the apportionment of shares in the electricity industry had been fairly handled. A man in a beard in the back row then spoke for several hours in a low monotone about the Government's failure to join the ERM at the right moment.

James Naughtie

THERE was a brief interruption as Mr Youssef Mohammed Ali Akhbar Islam ben Muslimwallah (formerly the novelist **Mr Salperson Rushdie**) stepped from the wings to sign copies of his favourite book, The Koran. An ugly scene threatened when Mr Kalim Siddiqui stood up at the back to demand the immediate death of everyone who disagreed with him on any point at all.

Mr Roy Hattersley then rose to propose that, in deference to the wishes of his Saudi hosts and his Muslim constituents, Mr Rushdie should be burned at the stake, but that, on the other hand, perhaps the blasphemy laws should be abolished.

Mr Strobes pointed out that, also in deference to the wishes of the Saudi people, it had been decided that this year there would be no winner of the Golden Esther Trophy for the Most Boring Woman of the Year. He was at once screamed down by **Mrs Teresa Gorperson**, who said: "There are hundreds of women totally qualified to receive the highest awards for boredom — e.g. **Lynda Chalker, Angela Rumbold** and myself."

Hubble Telescope

THE cast of TV's *Casualty* then went round members of the audience resuscitating those who had yet again fallen into a coma, while **Mr Nigel Kennedy** played selections from his best-selling album *Nigel Kennedy Plays The Four Seasons Yet Again*.

The lights dimmed, and over the tannoy the audience heard the strains of *Give Peace A Chance* played on the organ of the Hollywood Bowl by **Mr Dudley Moore**, accompanied by **Mr James Galway** on his celebrated golden flute. As the solemn music reverberated under the starlit desert sky, a hologram of **Mr Nelson Mandela** (live from Sweden) appeared to present for the first time the new "Posthumous Bore of the Year" award to "that great Apostle of International Peace, the late **Mr John Lennon**". The award, in the shape of a huge cheque, was received on behalf of her late husband by the world's most famous widow, **Mrs Yoko Onassis**. As she began to speak about how John's teachings had brought about world peace, particularly in the Middle East, Mrs Jackie Ono was suddenly forced to take cover from a massive Iraqi bombardment consisting of the following items: several hundred copies of the Lightman and Calcutt reports; thousands of the exciting new 5p pieces, invisible to the naked eye; several hundred thousand unwanted BSB Squarial devices; several million remaindered copies of Peter Ackroyd's *Dickens*; several billion Queen Mother 90th Birthday souvenir t-shirts, bearing such slogans as GOOD ON YER, MA'AM, I'M KEEPING QUEEN MUM and MINE'S A G&T; several trillion I ♥ RADIO FIVE car stickers; and various lots of unsold Impressionist paintings formerly the property of Mr Alan Bond, Mr Asil Nadir, Mr Adnan Khashoggi, Mr Ge[illegible] Ronson, Mr Mohammed Al-Fayed and Mi[illegible] Elizabeth Taylor, including such masterpieces as Van Gogh's *Sunreaders* and Monet's *Corn Circles*.

As the surrounding desert erupted in a holocaust of flame, the only human sound to be heard was that of Mr Paul Gascoigne singing in a broad Geordie accent "By the rivers of Babylon, I sat down and wept..."

TRUE STORIES

CHRISTOPHER LOGUE ILLUMINATED BY BERT KITCHEN

DURING his interview, Inspector Bob Topsill of the Auckland police said: "We were called to the cemetery and found a group of visitors surrounding Mr Nam Cham, a Thai vagrant, who was cooking a dead and skinned cat over a small fire. Mr Cham had found the dead cat on the road outside the cemetery. We arrested him for his own protection and he told us that he had been looking forward to the cat as he was very hungry and hated the local-style English cooking."

ADMITTING his offence, Mr Martin Wallace of Cheltenham said: "On Monday I was knocked down by a Ford Escort. I memorised its number on my way to hospital. On Friday I saw it waiting at a traffic light. So I lifted one of my crutches and bashed its windscreen and all its windows in. Then the driver got out, so I did the same to the stereo.

"Minutes later, the driver told me that she had bought the car on Wednesday."

"YOU could not say that our European match against Iceland in the Kaplakreke stadium was a great success," said a spokesman for Dundee United.

"Although we won the match with a superb third-minute shot, there was no one to cheer us on because with the weather at 2°C the stadium was completely empty except for our keenest fan, and he was suffering from badly chapped lips."

IN THEIR appeal against the verdict of guilty, Paris Clothing Ltd of Harlinghurst, Australia, heard Mr Henry Dewmax, a court official, tell the enquiry:

"The jury, five men and six women, had become very depressed during the 14-week trial. Shortly after they were locked up for an overnight verdict they sent out a long drinks list — rum, whisky, beer, wine and Pimms. By 9pm they were all so drunk that I thought I should call an ambulance. But when I suggested it, juryman 7 said: 'Piss off — our turn has come.' Soon afterwards I saw jurywoman 3 lying on the floor with her head in her hands saying 'Oh my God' and I knew there was something dreadfully wrong.

"Later that night I regret to say that two of the male jurors were not to be found in their rooms, and a search revealed that the jurywomen had not been locked up in a separate wing."

Asked by Mr Patrick Cisto if he thought a jury who became drunk and had sex with each other during their retirement could reach a true verdict, Mr Dewmax said: "Yes. provided they reached it early enough."

"MY CLIENT," said Mr Andrew Foster, "is angry because she found Ms Hemingway with her husband a few days after she, anticipating a reconciliation, had returned to his bed. She was told that Ms Hemingway had just called for tea. But Ms Hemingway lived in Yorkshire, 200 miles away."

MR HUGH Hackney, a millionaire lawyer and a member of the American Bar Association, is leading a group of American lawyers in a case against Homer E. Moyer, a fellow lawyer who organised a trip to the Soviet Union.

"As part of something Homer called 'the most meaningful legal interchange in the history of the western world'," Mr Hackney said, "we were invited to see the Bolshoi Ballet. But when we got out of the coach we were at the Moscow Circus. The organiser mollified us by saying that we would be seeing that famous Turkoman Dancing Bear troupe, but all we got was a set

of dancing pigs — that couldn't dance anyway.

"Then the guides said that the coach driver had not been paid, and he wouldn't drive us back to the hotel until he had been paid. And then the guides said that they, too, had not been paid — and the coach driver supported them.

"In the end we paid $700.00 for a pre-paid ballet of dancing pigs. When I called Homer on my return, he said that clause 18a of the tour agreement meant that he was not personally responsible."

INFORMATION: New Zealand (UK) News 20.9.90; Gloucestershire Echo 4.10.90; Dundee Courier 19.9.90; Sydney Morning Herald (n.d.); East Anglian Daily Times 5.9.90; Washington Business 29.10.90.

MONITORS: Anon, S. Taylor, David Anderson, Harriet Swift, Bob Russell, Sally Newcomb MacDonald.

"Alright, my loves? Gas! Gas! Gas!"

After a long battle with the county highways authority, Presteigne and Norton Town Council has succeeded in having a stile on the Orles footpath replaced by a kissing gate.

On the grounds that this alteration would be a boon to the elderly and the infirm, who find themselves in difficulty with stiles when trying to get a leg over, town mayor Councillor Eddie Taylor welcomed the news.

Mid Wales Journal

Knacker and Knee named in Honours

by Our Court Staff
Hugh Montgomery-Massivesnob

INSPECTOR "Knacker of the Yard" Knacker and Mr Ron Knee, manager of Neasden FC, are amongst those named in the New Year's Honours List published today.

The controversial Inspector, who once proclaimed that God had told him to frame his colleague John Stalker, has been given a knighthood for "services to digging up the Yorkshire moors for no very good reason".

"I am delighted," said the Inspector. "I have been praying to God for this for years and now Maggie has answered me."

Ron Knee, whose team, Neasden FC, has yet to win a single match, was equally delighted with his knighthood.

"I am over the moon," he told reporters from his Tesco Road flat. "It makes all the years of hard work worthwhile."

Also honoured is Neasden's controversial striker "Baldy" Pevsner whose own-goal rate is the highest of any player in the world.

"I am over the hill," he said.

committee were:

- **Being buggered by George Melly at school.**
- **The use of a four-letter word during a television debate.**
- **The use of the world "embonpoint" to describe Miss Pamella Bordes's breasts during the famous Worsthorne vs Brillo trial of 1989.**
- **The continuous employment of Mr Geoffrey Wheatcroft.**
- **His editorship of the two-page *Sunday Telegraph* "Lunacy" section under the general editorship of Mr Trevor Grove.**
- **Er...**
- **That's it.**

Top journalist honoured

Arise Sir Peregrine! Fleet Street's most distinguished Elder Statesman, Mr Perishing Worthless, has been given a Baronetcy in recognition of a long and distinguished career in journalism.

Among the highlights that must have impressed the scrutiny

Dame Peregrine Cartland. Honoured after years of writing rubbish.

Yes! It's Honours List Rhyming Slang!

Honours List	**They must have been pissed**
Services rendered	**Huge cheques tendered**
Sir Geoffrey Sterling	**Pound notes unfurling**
P.D. James	**Best of the Dames**
OBE	**Ghastly woman with the teeth on TV**
Mrs Edwina Booker	**Cleaned Maggie's cooker**
Worsthorne, Perry	**Sycophantic, very**
CBE	**Who on earth is he?**
KCVO	**Don't know**
Donald Sinden	**Not in again**
Scrutiny Committee	**Archer too shitty**

(That's enough honours — Ed)

COMING SOON

Sonia Valentine

starring
PAULINE COLLINS as Sonia Valentine
TOM CONTI as George Papoutsis

The touching, tender and funny
story of a middle-aged Bradford housewife who
feels trapped by her humdrum life as the wife of a
mass-murderer.
Desperate to escape,
Sonia goes on holiday with her best friend Barbara
Jones (Alison Steadman) to the fabulous Greek
island of Paros.
There romance blossoms
with rugged Greek lothario George Papoutsis, and
Sonia's life is transformed in ways she never
dreamed of.

"A sizzling love-romp"
The News of the World

"A grotesque libel"
Mrs Eileen Pembridge

"Oh no it isn't"
The Jury

NOW AT THE FOLLOWING GNOMEONS

Carman
Shawditch
Rozenberg
Kuttner
Ripper
Sutcliffe-on-Sea
Halloran
Rothermere

(That's enough cinemas — Ed)

HEIR OF SORROWS

BY

SYLVIE KRIN

THE STORY SO FAR: It is Christmas at Balmoral.

Now read on...

A FINE skein of powdery snow swirled and whirled in the darkening afternoon sky and gently covered the purple-dappled heather and the ancient battlements. Hardly a creature stirred in the bleak midwinter.

But inside the brightly lit Lowenbrau room of the castle all was merriment and jollity. Well not quite all. For in one corner sat a disconsolate figure in a paper crown, glumly contemplating the rest of the family, who were applauding the large oak Broadwood television set which had been presented to Queen Victoria by the inventor Sir Yogi Baird himself on her Diamond Jubilee.

As the strains of the National Anthem faded away bringing the Queen's traditional yuletide message to a close, the moment Charles dreaded had finally arrived.

His mother stood up, switched off the television, and with a gracious smile cried: "Charades everyone! And then tea!"

"How about tea first?" Charles ventured tentatively, but his question was lost as the rest of his family sprang to their feet and began moving the furniture to clear a space for the first game.

"Come on Chazza! Don't be a party-pooper!" Diana urged as Charles began to excuse himself.

"Er... it's my arm... you know... they told me not to do anything strenuous like you know skiing or charades or anything... er..."

"Mr Wetto!" sneered Edward, already donning a blonde wig and rummaging through an old dressing up box.

"Yah! Come on Charles! Don't be a girl's blouse!" chorused Andrew and the Duchess Fergiana.

Girl's blouse? What on earth could that mean? Once again Charles felt out of touch with his brother's generation.

The Queen quickly re-established order.

"Very well, Charles. If you can't act then you can be the first to guess the word. Everyone else go into the kitchen and think up something. Andrew, I don't want anything nautical. We had enough of that when your father used to play."

She looked across at the slumbering figure of the Duke of Edinburgh in a chair by the fire, dressed, as always on these occasions, in his uniform as Colonel-in-Chief of the Rhodesian Game Wardens. Draped over his well-fed midriff were a number of his favourite corgis, including Burnett, Dimbleby and the new puppy Moore.

Charles sat back in his chair with a feeling of temporary relief. He had felt this sensation before when, at Gordonstoun, he had been let off the naked fencing class taken by the sadistic games teacher, Mr Waldheim.

Soon, however, the others returned giggling conspiratorially and Edward came forward.

"Let's have some quiet, luvs! This one's going to be a really pro show! O.K. Chazza! So, Andy baby, when I say action, you do the first syllable."

The Princess Royal interrupted her brother sternly.

"You haven't told him it's one word yet, Edward. Or that it's three syllables."

Edward nodded enthusiastically.

"Right. From the top! And action!"

Edward produced a clapperboard (a memento of his days at the Really Useless Company) and snapped it shut.

"Take one!"

Onto the makeshift stage bounded the Duke of York, stripped to his underpants, eating a banana and making loud grunting noises.

Charles stared in bemusement at the simian performance. He tried to think of what the syllable might be but all he could bring to mind was a passage from a book by his old friend and mentor, Sir Laurens van der Post, *Christmas in the Easter Islands and Vice Versa*. There the warrior tribesmen had acted out the death of the animal spirits at the winter solstice. How had Sir Laurens put it?

"I'm dreaming of a white Christmas."

How very true that was, especially today when he could see large flakes of snow through the window.

"Come on, Charles! Look, it's easy."

Charles made a desperate stab at it.

"Er... Superman? These turtle chaps with the pizzas?"

Diana stamped her foot.

"You're not trying, Chazzo. It's one word!"

"Take two!" shouted Edward, now wearing black ballet tights and fake glitter.

Diana then came forward wearing a black Beatle-wig, strummed an electric guitar purposely with her left hand and sang *Mull of Kintyre* whilst the rest of the family pretended to accompany her on the bagpipes.

Charles began to get irritated. He couldn't understand any of it. What did it all mean? Who was this Mull of Kintyre? Perhaps he was a sort of footballer like this Gazza person who one was constantly reading about.

Fortunately the song did not last long and ended with the Duchess Fergiana giving a bass drum a huge thump with a stick of celery whereupon the Duke of Edinburgh stirred in his sleep and muttered a violent German oath — "Vorsprung durch technik!", sending the corgis scurrying across the room to seek refuge with their mistress.

"Couldn't be more obvious, Charles," insisted Anne.

"Don't be so dim, honestly. Let's do the third syllable."

Charles was beginning to get angry. He didn't like his sister's tone at all.

"Take three!" Edward now appeared as a Chinaman with a dog-collar complete with pigtail and mandarin hat.

"Who takee honolable man to be honolable wife?"

Diana then processed into the room in her wedding dress accompanied by Andrew dressed as his brother Charles with his arm in a sling and a polo stick over his shoulder. Charles had no idea what was going on.

As the couple stopped before him, Edward mimed putting something onto Diana's finger.

"Pletty plincess! Takee this ling! This blessed ling!! Got it Charles? *Ling*!"

Edward had broken into his normal voice. Charles stiffened and felt the hairs on the back of his neck bristle. He felt an overwhelming sense of shame, irritation and confusion.

"Well, Charles. I've got it. What did *you* think?" demanded his mother.

Charles frantically tried to put the three syllables together. Tarzan... er... pop-singer... er... Chinaman? What kind of word was that? Suddenly his temper snapped.

"I tell you what I think. I think the whole thing is appalling."

"Hooray! Hooray!" They cried as one. "Well done, Chazza! Ape-Paul-Ling!"

(To be continued)

A new short story with a surprising ending by JEFFREY ARCHER

A Matter Of No Honour

Jeffrey, the tanned, suave and brilliant 50-year-old million-selling novelist, looked across the table at his beautiful, academically brilliant wife, Mary. How stunning she looked as her fragrant blue eyes focused on that morning's *Daily Gazette Herald*. Lady Archer! Yes, that really suited her. And Lord Archer. Perfect, he thought, for a man who had played cricket for England and been in the cabinet at the age of 19.

He thought back to last night when the red phone by his bed had purred like it does in proper novels.

"Hello," he had said...

"Hello." He recognised the voice at once. It was Mrs Thatcher, Prime Minister of England.

"Jeffrey Archer?" she said. "I have good news for you. I am putting your name forward for a life peerage. It is the least you deserve for your years of loyalty and brilliance..."

And now was the time to tell his wife, Mary Archer, the good news about the impending honour.

"Darling," he murmured, "I have some good news."

"What is your good news?" his wife enquired. She looked more beautiful than ever. And he more handsome when he came to think of it.

"The good news," he said, "is that Margaret has given me a peerage. We are going to be Lord and Lady Archer."

"No we're not," she said, "I've just read it in the *Morning Globe*. You've been turned down, along with Rupert Murdoch."

"Damn."

© Somerset Maugham, a woman in Cambridge, a black man in Nigeria and many others too numerous to mention.

Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94: Christmas Day Worship for Troops Stationed in a Muslim Principality

Recreation Officer *(for it is the padre):* Peace be with you.

All: Until Jan 15th anyway. *(Or they may name some other date in accordance with UN Resolutions.)*

Recreation Officer: Allah be praised.

All: Death to Rushdie.

Recreation Officer: We are all gathered together at this time of celebration to give thanks to the Father Christmas for sending so many presents into the world.

All: And to the *Sun*, for sending us so many individual Ramadan puddings.

READING

(From the Koran or from the Harrods gift catalogue, whichever may be deemed more appropriate. For example the following may be read):

"Let not your women be seen topless for it is an abomination in the sight of Allah. Let no alcoholic beverages pass your lips because that too is an abomination. He who drinketh and driveth his camel shall be stoned to death. Happy Allahmas!"

THE CAROL

There shall then be sung a suitable carol from the Cat Stevens Hymnbook, e.g.

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground
Dee dum dee dum dee
dum dee dum
This chap Mohammed is
jolly sound."

Recreation Officer: Morning has broken.

All: As indeed has war.

"Yes, we do have a Salman Rushdie, but we can't tell you where it is"

Editorial staff and freelance writers required for *Sewer and Sewerage*, a new trade paper for the effluent disposal industry.

Applicants should have a keen interest in the subject and related products.

Send CV, reasons for your suitability, and three ideas for articles to:
Managing Director, *S & S*, Suite 3, Midhurst Mansions, Fortis Green, London N10 3EL.

UK Press Gazette

ERM
An Apology

Private Eye **in common with all other newspapers may over the past few months have given the impression that it believed British entry into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism was highly desirable not to say essential for the future of Britain's economy. Headlines such as "We're in! It's all systems go!" and "ERM we go! At last the Tories get it right!" may well have led readers to conclude that entry was a panacea for all the ills of the country.**

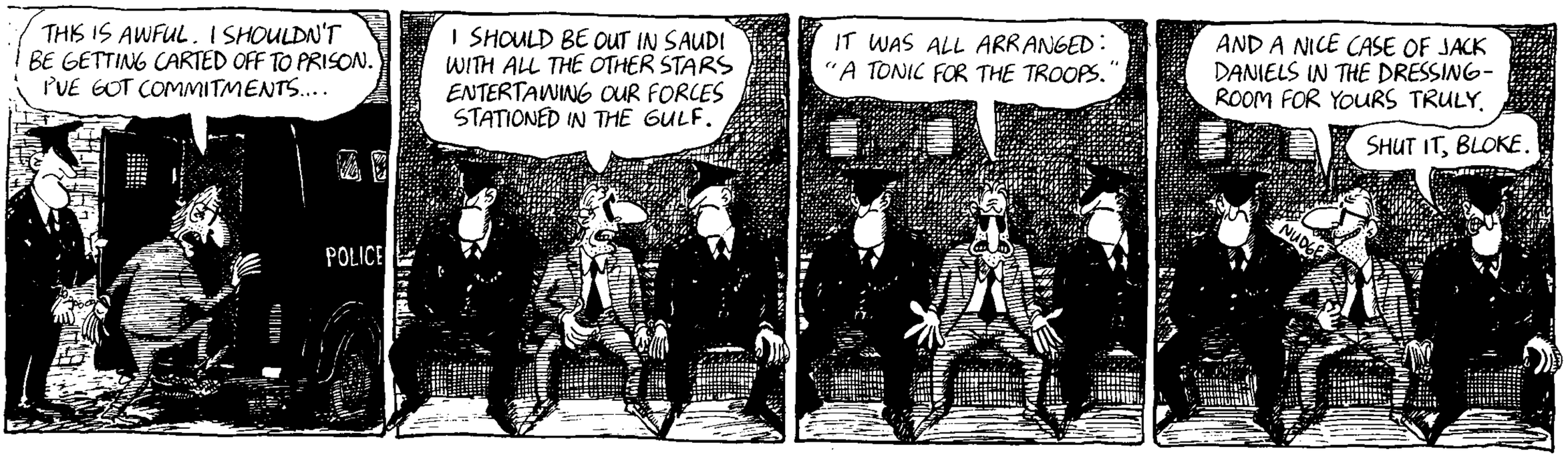
We now realise that entry into the ERM was an appalling error perpetrated by idiots and has seriously undermined the British Economy, driving it further into recession and committing it to a "straitjacket" from which it cannot escape.

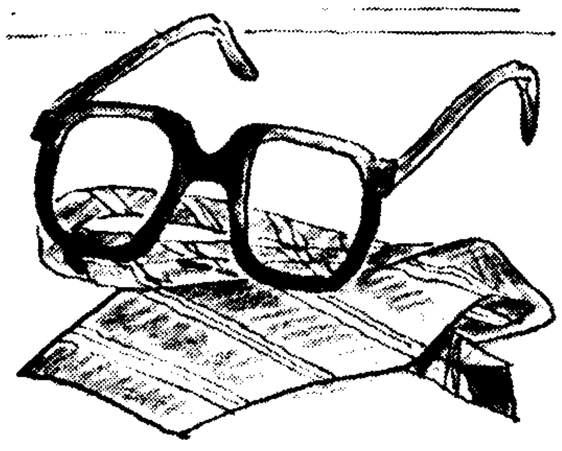
We would like to apologise to the ERM for our previous remarks which were based on nothing more than an ill-informed desire to keep Mrs Thatcher in power forever.

© All newspapers

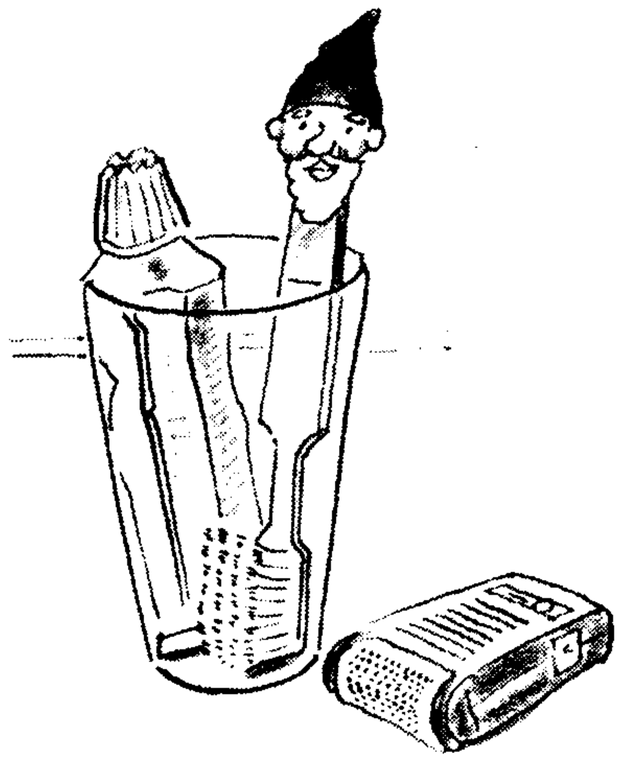
Great Bores Of Today.

"...it's impossible to get tickets but Jeremy knows someone who works in PR who got us some last week it's absolutely amazing it's my favourite book of all time I hadn't read it since I was six and they've really brought it to life I love Alan Bennett don't you? he's not in it of course which is a great shame we have got a tape in the car of him reading it out or is it Winnie the Pooh which is the one with Ratty in it? did you see those *Talking Heads* on TV the one with the vicar's wife was it Maggie Smith or was that the old woman dying of cancer? anyway it was brilliant Griff Rhys-Jones is in it he's wonderful in those lager adverts anyway he plays Badger I think or is it Mole? unfortunately the children got bored and we had to leave after the first half..."


THIS IS AWFUL. I SHOULDN'T BE GETTING CARTED OFF TO PRISON. I'VE GOT COMMITMENTS....
POLICE
I SHOULD BE OUT IN SAUDI WITH ALL THE OTHER STARS ENTERTAWING OUR FORCES STATIONED IN THE GULF.
IT WAS ALL ARRANGED: "A TONIC FOR THE TROOPS."
AND A NICE CASE OF JACK DANIELS IN THE DRESSING-ROOM FOR YOURS TRULY.
SHUT IT, BLOKE.
NUDGE



The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47¾



Tuesday

At last! The end of the horrid old five pee is in sight. I never liked the old coins, they were too big and if you had a lot of them in your pocket they were very heavy. I used to get holes in the jacket of my grey suit all the time and had to ask Norman to sew them up. I remember her saying to me: "John, if you had a smaller coin, I would not have to go to all this trouble."

She had a point, oh yes, I listen to women. So now, thanks to me we've got brand new five pee pieces small, neat and shiny! I heard my friend Chris Patten telling Norma Lamont that they are calling the new coin The Major because you don't know it's there. What a tribute!

Wednesday

A big aeroplane took me to America, and I saw a very good film. It was *Total Recall* but I cannot remember very much about it. Never mind. When I arrived I was met by a big black car with rows of seats in it and even a drinks cabinet! I asked for a tomato juice which put me in a good mood for meeting Mr Bush.

Luckily Mr Hurd had told me what to say to him. "Good afternoon. I am not Mrs Thatcher. I fully support your policy on everything. Goodbye."

I am pleased to record that the meeting went well and I noticed that we were almost exactly the same height. Quite an achievement, you must admit.

Thursday

I am staying in a very nice room in a big house with a very pleasant English couple, Mr and Mrs Ambassador. This seems to be a common name for people living abroad.

They even had Shredded Wheat which I ate with maple syrup. Quite interesting, I might take some back for Norman.

All the papers say that I cut a very impressive figure and made a great impact on the President.

Isn't that funny, because that's exactly what it said in the press release which my PR man Mr O'Donnigan wrote out.

Friday

Back home. We all went off to this big house in the country for Christmas. It is called Chequers and comes with the job of Prime Minister. How kind of Mrs Thatcher to let us use it.

We played Scrabble on Christmas Day, and guess who won? I put down all seven letters with the word HARDECU.

Norman said it didn't count because it was foreign and it wasn't in the dictionary. We had quite an argument about it — oh yes — I may appear mild but in the end I had to give in and she won the game.

Still we made up and drank far too much decaffeinated coffee together. Then we stayed up late and watched the Nine O'Clock News.

There were some pictures of myself with an American who I felt sure I had met somewhere before. There was also a lot of film of tanks and aeroplanes. They were talking about a war in a place called the Gulf.

I must ask Mr Hurd about this. I will do it as soon as we get back to work, after the recess or what I call the recession. I tried this joke on Norma Lamont who came for drinks on Boxing Day. He thought it was very funny and in return he told me a joke about a nun and a cucumber which I didn't understand at all.

Saturday

To Downing Street. This is in London. It is all very quiet. I was tempted to go back to work but decided to leave the grey biros where they were in the Sainsbury's yoghurt carton. "All work and no play makes John a dull boy." That's what my father used to say when he was somersaulting in the garden.

Norman came back from the shops and said that there was no one at the sales. She said people were blaming the high interest rates.

I couldn't understand it. If the interest was so high, why was there no one there? Later on Norma rang up with another of his jokes, which he told me was from the *Sunday Sport Book of Cartoons.*

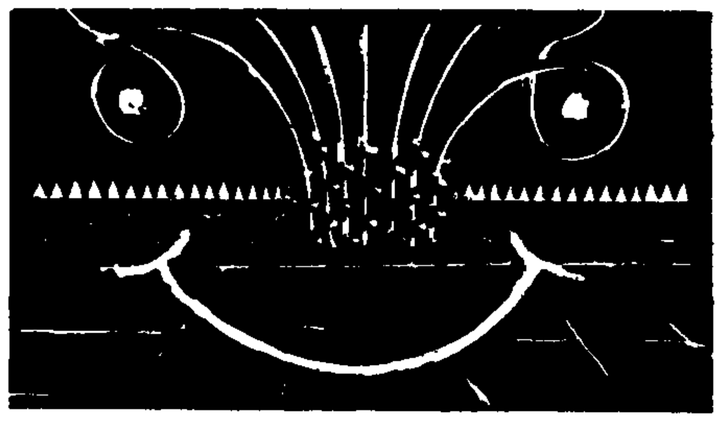
Monday

Another year begins. I resolve to stop reading the papers. They are so horrid about me. One even said I had no interesting ideas. Honestly! What about TESSA then — the Tax Exempted Super Saver Account?

This was one of my best which I introduced into my budget last year. What happens is that the small saver with up to say £9,000 to invest over a period of three to five years is guaranteed an interest rate of 4% over the gross ordinary share rate provided that the money is not touched for twenty years. Clever eh?

I have had a lot of letters asking how it works which shows how popular it is. I have sent them on to Tessa at the Treasury. Whoops! Norma of course. I shouldn't have had that second glass of shandy at lunchtime.

DIARY



ROBERT ROBINSON

A Mr Eric Blessed — blessed name, indeed, one might be forgiven for thinking, albeit a trifle impishly — writes to me from his homestead in Hornchurch, Essex. "Come *off* it, Robinson," he proclaims, a mite injudiciously, I would say. A regular and percipient correspondent, Mr Blessed tackles therein the vexed question of whether one should term the garment worn over one's shirt and under one's sports jacket a *woollie*, a *pullover*, a *jersey*, a *jumper*, or — most controversial of all, some might declare — a *sweater*.

I myself had stuck out my neck in order to proclaim allegiance to *jersey*. Ho hum. Mr Blessed is a sworn *jumper* man, and good for him, but as I perused his letter I found myself delighting in the image of a chap *jumping* up and down, as if in some curious way *becoming* that which he had first sought only to *wear*.

My mind — wayward and eternal student that it is — was soon besieged by other delicious possibilities concerning the inexhaustibly energetic Mr Blessed. Had he, perchance, reacted against other titular labels for said knitted articles of clothing as a result of a peculiarly traumatic experience suffered in youth? Had a policeman once requested the speeding Mr Blessed to *pullover*? Or had Mr Blessed undergone the disappointment — splendid image — of a rainy sojourn on the fair island of *Jersey*? I would be the last fellow to be so forward as to suggest that our Mr Blessed might ever become perspirant sufficient to be proclaimed a *sweater*, but the mystery holds fast. Personally, I'm rather partial to *jersey*, but there again I must admit that it has been quite an age since I've donned the aforementioned woollen knitwear, preferring a raincoat, which some people choose — for reasons too *bizarre* to contemplate — to call mackintosh.

A **Robinson**: a silly prat, a one-way conversation, or **to robinson**: a verb meaning to pass one's life talking nonsense?

I was wrestling with irresistibly jocular images of the original Mr Mackintosh (was there ever a Mrs Mackintosh, one cannot restrain oneself from wondering?) clad in sou'wester and wellingtons whilst craning my neck (craning! A towering apparatus overhead with a Bert or a Fred at the levers is conjured neatly into one's mind!) towards the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel on a visit to the fair city of Rome recently.

Mr P.T. Hopkinson of Rome had called my attention to the figures of God and Adam thereinupon portrayed — no, no, the word won't do, you don't *portray* God and Adam, you surely some-other-word-I'll-add-in-later them.

Would not Adam, poor chap, have grown the teensiest bit *chilly* lounging around in what we used to delight in terming his birthday suit? All-benevolent being God may well be, but might it not have crossed his mind to slip the shivering fellow a mackintosh or even — heaven forbid — a *jersey*?

Distracted by the sheer *ingenuity* of these fickle thoughts as they fluttered across my mind's eye, I found myself entertaining the suggestion (why, by the by, must one always *entertain* suggestions, as if duty-bound to pass them Dry Martinis and appropriate doilies while they put their feet up on one's sundry furnishings?) that my own *Stop the Week* circle is as close as damnit to the Algonquin Round Table of the 1920s, with Ann Leslie the Dorothy Parker *de nos jours* and Professor Laurie Taylor the Robert Benchley. Might I beg leave to submit that our collected aphorisms ("personally, I've never trusted a woman who wears a bright yellow hat!" — Ann Leslie; "Frankly, Bob, if it's breakfast cereals, I can take them or leave them!" — Professor Laurie Taylor; "In a curious sort of way, a tennis court is ideal for the playing of tennis, but little else!" — R. Robinson) would stand up well in any match against the aforementioned Algonquins?

A **Robert**: A saloon-bar philosopher; a smart-aleck with problem hair; or **to robert** (I robert, you robert, he, she or it roberts): to use thirty words where three would do.

On, or should I say "aboard", a train the other day, I was gently wondering why on earth a motorcar is called a motorcar (what, perchance, is or are a "moto", and what in heaven's name can a "rcar" be?: the mind quite literally boggles) when a ticket-collector came lurching into view.

"Ticket please," he enunciated, holding out a machine which looked for all the world like one of those contraptions great aunts were once in the habit of employing for retrieving stones from the hooves of gee-gees.

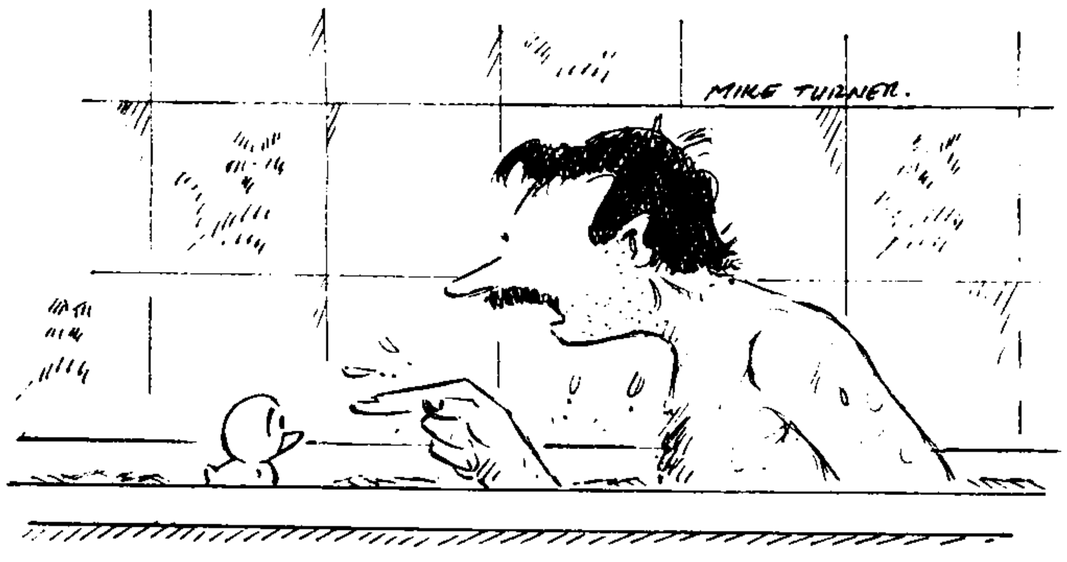
"Might I be forgiven for thinking that your over-riding purpose at the present time is to cast a beady eye over my railway ticket, or absence thereof?" I inquired with due geniality.

"Ticket please, sir!" he replied, a mite testily I thought, holding out an ungloved hand for my inspection.

"Come, come, my dear fellow," I said. "A little more *specificity* — if such word exists! — might help matters immeasurably. A ticket to The Proms? A ticket by rickshaw to Timbuctoo? Please define your terms before venturing into such a veritable menagerie of possibilities."

As his clenched fist landed on what I suppose I must learn to call my "hooter", I reflected that all might not be quite right in the baffling world of transport. Alas and alack, my subsequent observation to the incensed collector that he might consider punching my ticket rather than my nasal protuberance resulted in another swift jab, this time to my jaw. Thinking it best to reveal myself in full possession of the travel documentation in question, I was driven to wonder whether the art of conversation is a skill much prized by the modern world.

In which continent would one find a cockatoo? Can you name three Kings of England who have never ventured abroad? What was the former name of Zimbabwe? In what year was the Magna Carta signed? In which opera by Gilbert and Sullivan does Sir Joseph Porter appear? Who or what is a *vizier*? By what quirk of fate did an intelligent human being come to waste his life asking middle-class boffins questions such as these? No conferring.



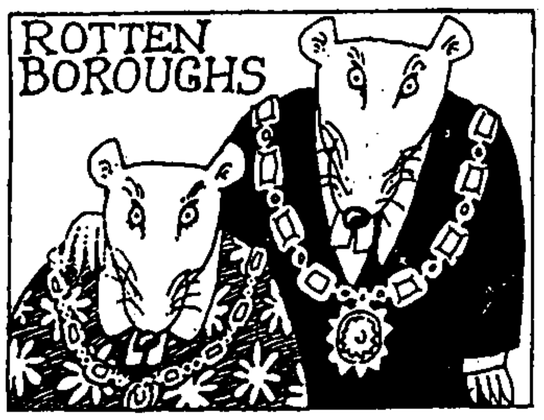
*"I'm not asking... No... I'm **demanding** a rise..."*

Tree expert sent in to top Arab

South Bucks Express

Rats protest at rundown city houses

Yorkshire Evening Post



WEST WILTSHIRE

FOLLOWING the collapse of Thatch, can the fall of West Wiltshire, the model Thatcherite local authority, be far behind?

The crisis involving the borough's highly dubious "privatisation" of its computer operations, chronicled in the *Eye* 12 months ago, has resulted in the arrest of several leading protagonists, including our old friend Gerald Garland, the council's former chief executive.

The controversy dates back to 1988 when the council's very successful computer software company, West Wiltshire Software (WWS) was "sold" to a private computer company, West Wiltshire Information Systems (WWIS). But lo! The latter company was set up by former council officers who were creaming lucrative municipal contracts off the town hall worksheet for their new "private" firm.

Now, following a long inquiry, Inspector Knacker of Trowbridge has hauled in Garland as well as leisure services director Rodger White, land management boss Roger Pugh and Frank Archer, former council technical services chief.

At Westminster the Labour Party is cock-a-hoop, with shadow local government spokesman David Blunkett and Hull West MP Stuart Randall vying for the honours of embarrassing the Tories. Shortly before Christmas the two invoked parliamentary privilege in a Commons motion to name six Tory councillors as having "... by-passed the legitimate council committee structure to make corrupt decisions." These sentiments have been echoed by the district auditor who has criticised the Tory borough for delegation of responsibility and conflicts of interest.

West Wilts, anxious to clean up the town and surrounding countryside, has engaged Messrs Sue, Grabbit and Runne in an attempt to recover slightly less than one million pounds which had gone awry in the process.

BIRMINGHAM

BIZARRE and alarming details are emerging of the city's dealings with Street Equipment Ltd — the French company contracted to signpost the city centre and whose owner has just been sent for trial on municipal corruption charges in Belgium.

Birmingham's publicity director Lynda Longbottom trumpeted the deal as a great triumph, with SE Ltd supplying 550 "information points", 25 automatic public toilets and a host of other street furniture valued at about £7 million. The city would pay nothing, she said; all SE Ltd wanted was 50 per cent of the space on the illuminated points for advertising.

SE Ltd is already known to *Eye* readers in Manchester (see *Eye 755*). In Birmingham, meanwhile, hacks who are well aware of the city's history of blunders in such matters, demanded to see the contract. Senior officers tried to block this but gave way when faced with the Access to Information Act.

Far from being free, it emerged that the signs would cost the city about £200,000 a year in electricity, rates and other charges. About 300 signs have already been put up by French workgangs at prestige points around the city — many contrary to planning guidelines. SE Ltd has also deliberately angled the eight-foot high signs across pavements so they can be read by drivers — a menace to both traffic and pedestrians.

Now Jean-Claude Decaux, SE Ltd's sole director and signatory of the Birmingham contract, has been indicted on charges of corruption in Liege, Belgium. France's self-styled "king of the bus-shelters" allegedly gave gifts and other inducements, including holidays to Mauritius, to a variety of city officials, including the mayor, who also faces charges.

The honest burghers of Brum held an immediate inquiry when they heard of M. Decaux's problems. But at the end of their day-long probe they said there was "not a hint" of anything suspicious in Birmingham.

MANCHESTER

ALAS! The Labour-controlled city council's brazen attempt to rip thousands of pounds from the unsuspecting taxpayer (*Eye* 757) will not be enough to save Manchester from Murkeyside-style financial ignominy.

Only a week before Christmas "shocked" councillors discovered that housing finance officers had got their sums slightly wrong. When they looked in the town hall coffers they found they had £14 million less than they expected.

Fortunately, housing chairman Dave Lunts has the ideal solution to restore this piffling shortfall. From the beginning of the year the city's already impoverished council tenants will have to fork out an extra £5 a week in rent until the missing money is made up. It is not known whether any of the city's highly-protected housing officers (especially those with Labour Party membership cards) will be equally penalised.

Literary Review

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

☐ **IN YE GOOD olde days, before transatlantic conglomerates came into being in publishing, W H Smith ruled the roost. No single publisher, not even Collins, was large or powerful enough to deny Smug higher discounts whenever the "bookselling" chain demanded them.**

And no one, not even Sir Billy Collins, dared question Smug as to why it allowed the world to regard it principally as a bookseller when, in its many high street shops throughout the land, so few titles were stocked, and those of the most blatantly unintellectual sort. (And it's WHS which wishes to retain the net book agreement!)

Publishers hated and despised Smug but nobody dared say so out loud. There was much snobbery in all this. Publishers, naturally, were educated at Eton, and nice booksellers such as Sir Tommy Joy of Hatchards and the independents around the country sounded as if they went to good public schools even if they didn't. Smug's managers and book buyers, arisen from the shop floor, certainly didn't. And yet, dearly beloved, because it possessed so many shops, the vulgar W H Smith could and did dictate to the publishers.

No longer. Booksellers have conglomeratised too, and Smug is selling a smaller proportion of the whole book cake. Although WHS still hasn't quite got the message, publishers (if not possibly the general public) would be better off if Smug ceased to sell books altogether. Publishers are being asked to give Smug ludicrous discounts of, in the case of hardbacks, just under 50 percent of the net price, and over 50 percent on paperbacks. And now WHS has asked for 90 days' credit as well. Publishers, after all these years of being bullied by Smug, are beginning to fight back. All praise to BBC Books, Octopus, Pan Macmillan and Random Century for saying enough is enough, and declining altogether to trade with W H Smith.

■ AS PREDICTED by "Bookworm" months ago and fervently denied at the time by chairman and sole managing director, Tom "Snipcock" Rosenthal, the only financially successful part of Andre Deutsch Ltd, the children's list, has been asset stripped and sold off to Scholastic Publications.

Snipcock crows that children's list managing director Pam Royds will continue in that position under the new proprietors — before conceding that in future she'll be answerable to Scholastic's new managing director, David Kewley.

The sale of *Postman Pat* and his pals will enable Snipcock to indulge his taste in rarefied adult publishing for a little longer. However, all is not as it seems. As with Hodders, no one would offer sufficient cash to put Snipcock out of his misery. One leading London publisher offered £1½m to buy Deutsch, which Snipcock told him was insulting, and that before he realised the freehold of Deutsch's Great Russell Street building, worth £1m, was included in the deal.

☐ A NUMBER of people objected to "Bookworm" calling Robin Hyman "nice" in a piece some weeks ago about his selling Unwin Hyman to the Dirty Digger's voracious Harper-Collins with Allen & Unwin's erstwhile boss, Rayner "Hobbit" Unwin, spluttering tetchily in the wings. Could they have been right, for now Hyman, in his final months as president of the Publishers' Association, has threatened to sue the Society of Authors?

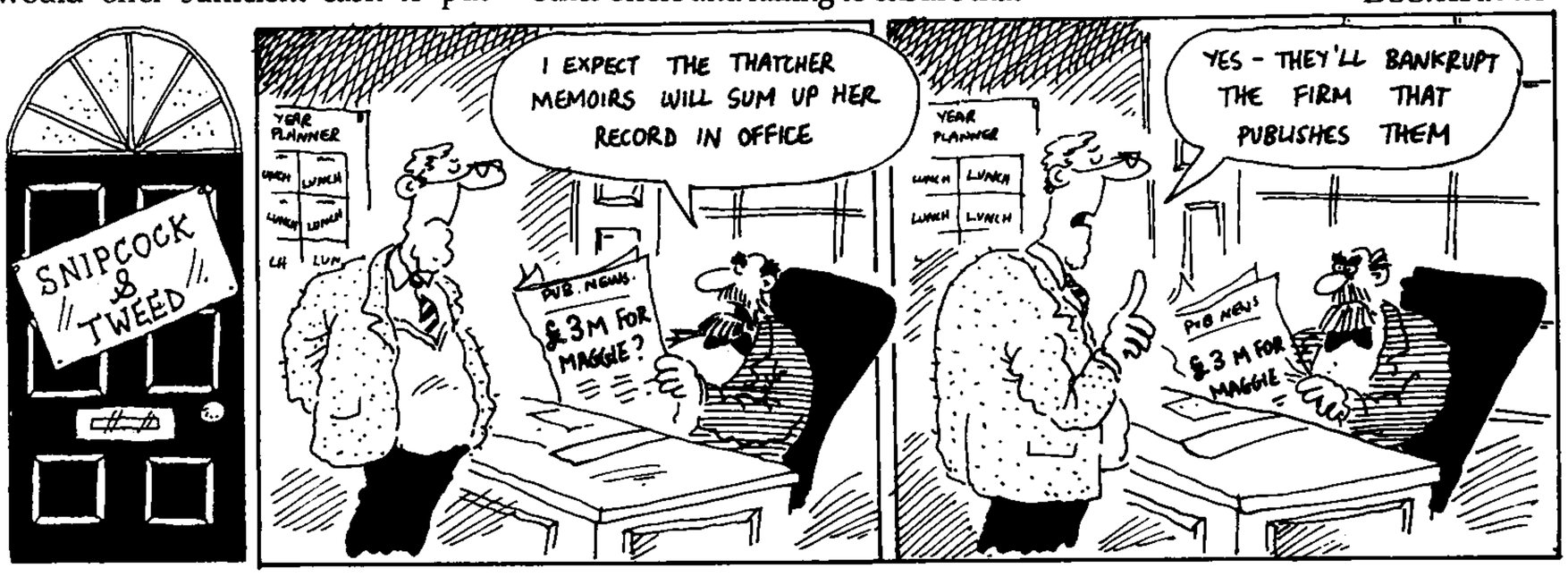
Mark LeFanu, the author's union's secretary, thoughtfully sent Hyman an advance copy of the winter issue of the society's quarterly, *The Author*, which contained an article by disenchanted Michael Pountney, ex-Smug chief book buyer before becoming Unwin Hyman editor, whose services were dispensed with by the Digger. Pountney alleged that Hyman sold his firm to Murdoch without soliciting any other offers and failing to ensure that all the staff were offered new jobs. This does not contravene any legal requirements on Hyman's part but is considered very bad form in the gentlemanly ethics of publishing.

Hyman's telephone call to LeFanu was followed by a solicitor's letter insisting that the entire issue of *The Author* be pulped. LeFanu feebly complied, protesting that the Society of Authors couldn't afford to fight the president of the Publisher's Association in court.

■ *WHY SHOULD anyone expect to keep his or her job when a publishing house is bought and sold?*

Lord Weidenfeld bought J M Dent and its Everyman Library a couple of years ago. In a letter received in the very last post before Christmas, Popeye's hit man Christopher Falkus wrote to his friends in the book trade announcing that the very last Dent employee, editorial director Malcolm Gerratt, was being made redundant, but that no one should worry as his authors would be distributed around the other editors at Clapham. Tough on old Malcolm, but what is surprising is that he lasted so long, given that he's a scholarly chap who knows something about, well, editing.

'Bookworm'


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
YEAR PLANNER
LUNCH
I EXPECT THE THATCHER MEMOIRS WILL SUM UP HER RECORD IN OFFICE
PUB. NEWS
£3M FOR MAGGIE?
YES - THEY'LL BANKRUPT THE FIRM THAT PUBLISHES THEM

The Herald of Free Enterprise

Wig 'n' peer

THE ELEVATION of Sir Jeffrey Sterling to the peerage — step forward Lord Zeebrugge — must mark the first time a leading British industrialist has been ennobled only weeks after his company had been charged with the manslaughter of nearly 200 of its customers.

P&O may be one of the Government's favourite companies, but the scandal of the failed prosecution against it for manslaughter in Zeebrugge in March 1987 is unlikely to be left alone by the families of those who died there. On 30 October, soon after the verdict, Mrs Margaret de Rohan, whose daughter Alison died on the Herald of Free Enterprise, wrote a careful letter to the Lord Chancellor criticising the conduct of the case.

Her letter asked two fundamental questions. Firstly, why did the judge, Mr Justice Turner, tell the jury in his opening remarks not to be influenced by the Sheen inquiry into the disaster which, he said, "pointed the finger at a number of individuals, some or all of whom may be before you in the court"?

This crass statement allowed the defence lawyers to fall on the judge like a pack of wolves. Their clients, they whined, had not been named in the Sheen inquiry. No fingers had been pointed at them. It was disgraceful that their clients should be tarnished in this way etc, etc.

This was all humbug. The Sheen inquiry (while it had not mentioned some of the defendants) had attacked the entire P&O management in the most savage terms. But the technical point made with such ferocity by the defence lawyers was unarguable. Mr Justice Turner went red in the face and spluttered his way through. Many observers at the trial felt that his objectivity completely vanished from that point on. He whined and grovelled to the defence lawyers and bullied the wretched prosecutor, Mr David Jeffrey QC, without mercy. Many observers also felt that Mr Justice Turner's final and astonishing decision not to let the issue be decided by the jury may have been influenced by his concern that his early gaffe might be criticised if the case went to appeal.

Mrs de Rohan's second point was about the meaning of the word "obvious". The judge ruled that the case shouldn't go to the jury because it wasn't "obvious" that doors might be left open even though there was no failsafe system of reporting or indicating whether they were open or not. The judge readily accepted the definition of "obvious" supplied to him by P&O's lawyer, Sydney Kentridge, as "something which stares one in the face".

Mrs De Rohan suggested that a better meaning of "obvious" is conveyed by the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* — "easily seen or understood, clear; plain". She thought it wrong that such a crucial issue should be taken away from a jury, and ended her letter with a strong statement that matters should not be left where they were.

At the Lord Chancellor's department, the letter caused a bit of a flurry. The immediate response was to do nothing about it and to hope Mrs de Rohan would forget and forgive. She didn't. She wrote again on 27 November, pointing out that four weeks had passed without even an acknowledgement. At last, on 10 December, a Mr A.N. Clark, from the criminal operations branch, obliged with a reply.

He had no answer to the criticism of the judge's ridiculous mistake in his opening remarks. On the second point he expressed no view either, except to say: "The law is rarely as simple as dictionary definitions which themselves may differ between dictionaries."

He allowed himself the following unforgettable sentence: "A trial judge has the power and indeed the duty at an appropriate stage to direct a jury to return verdicts of not guilty against the defendants concerned if he considers that no reasonable sum, properly directed, could convict a defendant on the evidence before it." Those wanting to know what the word "sum" means in this sentence should write to Mr Clark.

Mr Clark managed to cast some blame on the prosecution who decided, he wrote, "to close their case despite the fact that they had not called all the evidence available to them". Everyone in court, however, realised that the director of public prosecutions (DPP) did his best to let the case run its full course, but he and his counsel were eventually bullied by the judge into surrendering.

Mr Clark's letter has been compounded by the DPP's decision not to appeal. Thus the formidable points made by Mrs de Rohan (and felt by all the bereaved) will never be heard in a British court. The suspicion persists that the legal process, including the principle of trial by jury, has been distorted in the interests of one of Britain's most powerful companies — and one whose boss approved huge cheques to the Tory Party, advised the Department of Trade and Industry and even sat on Mrs Thatcher's broadcasting committee.

Forestry

Conifer trick

THE SIGHT of millions of dead Christmas trees sticking out of the nation's dustbins provides a timely reminder of the state of the British forestry industry.

Though it may appear to be showing increased concern for the country's woodlands, the ideology of profits-for-the-few seems to outweigh environmental concerns and new policies stubbornly protect blanket conifer planting.

The Forestry Commission, as timber producer and regulator, has its feet in private and public camps and has virtually allowed policy to be dictated by lucrative conifer planting interests. In return for sticking unsuitable, often foreign pines and spruces into fragile upland soils, high tax bracket investors were, until mid-1988, given full tax exemption. This "tax avoidance" forestry balanced financial accounts rather than ecosystems and received a wink and a nod from the Forestry Commission for decades.

Steve Tompkins, author of the controversial *Forestry in Crisis* (after publication the Institute of Chartered Foresters accused him of "bringing the profession into disrepute") says that despite the Forestry Commission's new "green" image it still favours investors in conifers over broadleaved deciduous trees.

When abolishing the tax break, much of what the Government took away from conifer interests with one hand it gave back with the other: new grants for planting broadleaves may make the Government look enlightened, but renewed conifer subsidies still ensure rows of Christmas trees are the economic choice of the future. New grants for conifers cover up to 100 percent of costs, excluding overheads, confirms Oxford Forestry Institute lecturer Philip Stewart.

Until the bubble burst in 1988, planting conifers was a bonanza for investors. Competing bids raised land prices so investment became land- rather than timber-driven. However, the Government's effective vote of no confidence in forestry choked the market. Overnight the bottom fell out, asset values (especially land) plummeted and investors were left exposed. Now, however, pressure from remaining "conifinanciers" to prop up the value of their sagging stands is intense — hence the continuing grants masked behind a border of broadleaves.

Critics say conifer grants have precious little benefit for society in general, and a report commissioned by the Council for the Protection of Rural England documented the Forestry Commission's bogus and shifting reasons for continuing to plant them. Over the last 70 years profiteering has been hidden behind claims of securing wood supply for times of war (an outmoded notion given the nature of modern warfare); of generating jobs (they have *decreased* with mechanisation); and import substitution (broadly rejected by economists). These days conifer planting is allegedly saving Britain from the greenhouse effect by absorbing carbon dioxide, but the Forestry Commission keeps quiet about broadleaves being just as effective.

Tompkins warns of a resurgence in planting dense, dark upland forests as pension funds are wooed back into the "safe return" market. In as little as five years planting could return to early-1988 levels

Airports

London fright path

IN A NEAR empty council chamber in Stratford, east London, an interminable public inquiry has been hearing submissions on a plan to expand London City Airport to allow 20,000 jets a year to play dodgems in the flightpaths over the capital and to take off and land at an airstrip wedged among blocks of flats.

Allied to this is the vexed question of the new bridge across the Thames that would serve the expanded airport — restricting the movement of shipping so the river would regularly become a one-way street.

The benefit would be that business people from the City would be spared the journey to one of London's three other airports and their talks in Frankfurt, Zurich and Milan could last an extra quarter of an hour. Additionally, Mowlem, which built the airport accepting that it would never handle big, noisy planes, would finally make a profit from it: the current 300,000 passengers are not enough, says the firm; it needs 500,000.

But what of the bridge, which would be served by new roads running through Oxleas Wood on the south bank, an area undisturbed for 8,000 years, and the 140 houses which would have to be knocked down?

The bridge has to be low so planes do not hit its towers on take off; but, says the London Rivers Association (LRA), it also has to be high enough, and with support pillars far enough apart, to allow big ships to sail underneath. The Department of Transport wants a cheap bridge and the Port of London Authority (PLA) has accepted the need for one-way working. That, says Rose Jaijee of the LRA, is because the PLA is to be given £1 million to operate one-way working. She adds that the cheaper bridge will increase the possibility of collisions and that the risks have not been analysed.

Originally the Department of Transport wanted a bridge with two towers more than 400ft high. But this was abandoned because of what's known in the trade as pilot error. A second design for a bridge only 250ft high was ugly and gave insufficient clearance for ships below. A third design has now been introduced by Stanhope Properties, which wants an arched girder bridge by the prize-winning Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava. Critics say it will cost only £10 million more than the cheap one; the transport department says it will cost nearly twice as much (£138 million compared with £75 million). In real life, either bridge will cost far more than any of the guestimates.

The mistrust underlying the row at London City Airport, meanwhile, stems from the fact that it was built on a lie. The London Docklands Development Corporation, which supports it, promised the locals that jets would never be allowed there. Although operators, airlines and airport authorities warned that such a ban would not make commercial sense, permission for building ruled out noisy aircraft.

However, an attempt is now being made to revise that condition and extend the runway from 768 feet to 1,199 feet. Connie Hunt, of the Newham Docklands Forum, says: "We heard that they wanted to bring in jets but when we asked about it, we had a letter from the LDDC saying that it was just a rumour. Within three months, they were holding demonstration flights. We are not against airports — but there isn't another airport anywhere in the world so near to people's homes."

Mowlem has said that if the extension does not go ahead the airport could close, with a consequent loss of jobs and prestige for London. But no one seems to mention that London is already the noisiest and dirtiest capital in Europe and that Britain's continental neighbours have largely banned flying over densely-populated city areas.

In the City

THE Serious Fraud Office investigation into Polly Peck is now moving into its second phase, consolidating the existing £25 million worth of theft and false accounting charges against chairman (for how much longer?) Asil Nadir and broadening the inquiries to take in not only other matters and earlier periods, but also other people. For one fact clearer than the Polly Peck accounts is that the huge sums of money involved —possibly in excess of £100 million — could not have been transferred into and out of Polly Peck bank accounts by one man. He had to have help.

So far considerable attention has been concentrated on the South Audley Management duo of Elizabeth Forsyth, a former banker, and Jason Davies, a one-time stockbroker. Both are considered highly knowledgeable about Nadir's private affairs, although where those end and Polly Peck's begin is one of the mysteries the SFO is out to prove.

Days after Nadir's arrest Forsyth suddenly reemerged in Britain, having been absent since shortly before the SFO raid on the SAM offices in September. She has also arranged to keep a new year date with the SFO who have been waiting to question her while she shuttled between Turkey, Northern Cyprus and Switzerland.

Being the savvy operator she is said to be, it would not be surprising if Forsyth, unlike Davies, was well aware of the Oliver Roux rule — he/she who does the first deal does the best deal.

But Forsyth and Davies were on the outside of Polly Peck, if inside the chairman's office. What about inside the company? There attention has centred on three close trusted associates of Nadir — John Turner, Armagen Tekvar and Anil Doshi.

Turner, an accountant and former Polly Peck company secretary during the period 1988-89, was arrested the same weekend as Nadir but released without charge. He may or may not be on police bail. Turner was a key player at Polly Peck headquarters. According to several directors, he was the effective financial controller.

Tekvar, a Turkish architect, was an original director of SAM when it was set up in mid-1987. He resigned after a month and for some time has been the Polly Peck architect. Most of the company's building has been of the ultra-expensive hotel variety in Turkey and Northern Cyprus. Indeed some £100-£120 million is said to have found its way into new, rebuilt and yet to be built hotels and holiday villages. The cost of Polly Peck's leisure activities are as mystifyingly high as its legendary profits from oranges, lemons and cardboard boxes. Tekvar worked out of an office in Hays Mews, a short distance from the main Polly Peck offices in Berkeley Square. These offices were the subject of a subsequent raid by the SFO and it is believed the SFO may also have paid a visit to the architect's home.

Doshi has been Nadir's longest serving and closest adviser dating back to pre-Polly Peck Wearwell days in the East End's rag trade district. Doshi, an Asian accountant, joined the Polly Peck board three months after Nadir in 1980. Although resigning some four years ago, Doshi remained a trusted adviser. They were directors of a Polly Peck subsidiary, Afinacorp, until it was sold to Doshi around two years ago. Doshi was on the list of those whom the SFO was eager to interview. It is not known whether he has yet been seen.

It is of course the case that these individuals may have had no involvement in any suspect transactions relating to Polly Peck funds or that any involvement was entirely proper not to say innocent and can be easily explained.

ONE FACTOR, it seems, which could complicate the still uncertain financial future of leisure group Brent Walker is its possible capital gains tax liability arising from the sale of assets.

Such sales were often supposedly sheltered by inter-company transactions, presumably relying on previous losses which could be offset against the sale gains. But it seems some of these arrangements may be less than Revenue proof. A further complication is that prospective buyers of the Brent Walker subsidiaries sheltering these gains are proving less than happy to pay the millions necessary to takeover such liabilities which is what George "The Prisoner" Walker sometimes requires if there is to be a deal. No wonder it is proving hard to complete the asset realisations which are a vital part of the planned reconstruction of Brent Walker's £1.4 billion debt.

ALTHOUGH it is early days in the probe into the wreckage at Levitt Group, a number of interesting lines of inquiry have emerged for those, not least the clients, who want to know what happened to the supposed £300 million-plus of funds under management and the more than £20 million handed over last year by gullible City institutions and others for Levitt Group shares.

Of considerable interest are said to be Levitt's links with Lombard Odier, the Swiss fund management group with which there was a joint venture. A definite source of money out — as distinct from possible money in — was the Levitt New York operation housed in one of Gerald Ronson's properties — Levitt cosied up to Gerald, particularly by waving his charity cheque book. Just how impressed Ronson was is less certain.

GOOD TO see that the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee saw no reason and was given none to object to the Thatcher peerage for "Sir" Gordon White and knighthood for "Sir" Tim Bell.

Clearly the Inland Revenue has forgiven the little matter of White's accidental oversight in having a London home while being non-resident for tax purposes.

After all, this totally innocent mistake by White and his advisers was fully and privately resolved in the appropriate manner with the Revenue once the financial consequences were itemised and drawn to their attention. Much more relevant were such loyal services above and beyond as rallying the captains of industry behind the fast fading prime minister just before she was dumped by her cabinet colleagues.

Equally with Bell there has been quite properly no regard given to that unfortunate incident in Hampstead so many years ago or his expensive habits of the past.

WHITE'S at last twin peer "Lord" Hanson — money can't buy everything and most certainly not life peerages, even if your company does make five figure donations to the Tory Party — has meanwhile been showing his style of caring Conservatism by seeking to have Hanson avail itself of up to £130 million surplus in the Imperial Tobacco pension fund.

Strongly criticising the Hanson group's proposal to switch pensioners in the £1.3 billion fund into a new, potentially less generous scheme, the senior judge of the high court's chancery division, Sir Nicolas Browne-Wilkinson, questioned whether the Hanson subsidiary was acting in "good faith", said it must not look solely to its own financial interest and indicated the company could even have been acting unlawfully. Not surprisingly he ruled against the proposed transfer which would have given the company access to the surplus.

Ironically both Hanson and White are themselves pensioners — Hanson is 69 this month, White is 67. Since 1986, just as he approached pensionable age, Hanson's salary — plus, presumably, pension contributions — has risen from a mere £327,000 to last year's modest £1,457,000 — a drop on the previous year's £1,534,000 in keeping with the Thatcher line against excessive pay demands.

It is no doubt completely unrelated that pension payments can gain from the average salary paid in any three consecuctive years of the 10 prior to retirement.

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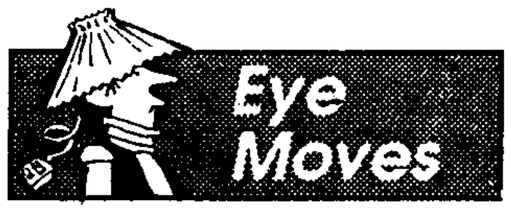

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REDUNDANT teacher forced to emigrate needs £2,500 to ship four bull terriers to new beginning. Alternative unthinkable. Box 2358.

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UGLY, FAT, young female, sad with life needs only £850 for facelift and special diet. Please help. Donations received with thanks. Box 2658.

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WORK STRESS? You're lucky! Nursery nurse (28) retired by work accident needs help. As you give you receive. Box 2858.

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ARABIAN KNIGHT. Unattached grad army officer, 27, in Gulf, seeks female curiosity from a passion bundle, 20-35. No camels or Iraqis. Photos will be reciprocated. Box 1158.

DESERT NAVIGATOR getting bored in the Gulf. Young Army Officer requires correspondence to keep his moral up with a view to meeting on return to the UK. Box 5657.

5 RAKISH army officers in the Gulf need amusing letters from girls who are beautiful, amusing, adventurous and just good fun. We'll wine you and dine you and...after Kuwait is free. Photos too please! Box 5557.

DESERT RAT Cavalry officer dreams of blonde in tweed. Locket sized portrait preferred. Box 5757.

I AM A lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps currently serving our country in Saudi Arabia. I am 32 years of age, single, fun loving and extensively experienced in all fields of military life, but now I'm looking forward to broadening my horizons with the female gender, casual or permanent. I'm fair haired, well off and well endowed but have no time to look for a partner. I am an Ex-Etonian to boot. Box 5857.

DASHING YOUNG British medics, marooned on Operation Granby seek vivacious females for six months of celibate correspondence. Must be prepared for vigorous un-celibate activity on our return. Sand paper supplied. Photo demanded. Box 7754.

Eye Love

HANDSOME black chartered accountant, 33, seeks serious match from females, aged 20-35, photo/phone appreciated. Box 17257.

SUFFOCATING male, late 30's, desperate to escape tedious, predicatable homelife, seeks well hung, sexy lady for daytime physical affair/friendship. Clean and discreet only. Photo, phone, London/S.E. Box 17357.

TIED LADY 36, seeks doctor to effect emotional cure. Birmingham. Box 17457.

BIGGLES, now 41 and fun loving, grounded on beautiful Yorkshire coast, seeks dashing lady co-pilot to share lifetime sorties across Sea of Mediocrity to Nirvana. Whizzo crate. Roomy hangar. Guaranteed fuel. Ideally, applicants aged early thirties, cosmopolitan, effervescent, tall, impeccably manicured, confident and with ready smile. Lavish goggles provided. C.V. and photo to guarantee reply. Box 17557.

ROGUE MALE, approaching fifty in the fast lane. Slim, civilised, boyish good looks, divorced. Seeks similarly irresponsible lady with high standards and low morals. Photographic evidence of latter appreciated and retumed. South/S. West. Box 16757.

ALLEGEDLY Tom Selleck, lookalike, 32, in physically unsatisfying relationship, seeks attractive lady for occasional outings and mutually, absolutely, discreet mischief! Box 16857.

MALE, solvent, houseowner, 43, 5'10", I.Q. 120+ needs to reproduce. Any offers? Brighton. Box 16957.

TWO LUSCIOUS lemon cakettes needed for afternoon tea (Central London). Must be under 30, slim, N/S and attractive. Box 17057.

COME ON GIRLS! Where are you when I need you? I'm 30, tall, dark, slim and good looking into skiing, horses, countryside, fast cars and boats. I have a lovely country home but I need someone to enjoy life with. Stop hiding! (Herts, Beds, Bucks, London.) Box 17157.

CLOTHES designer, successful, 36, male graduate, separated but still fairly affluent, has recently moved to London and wishes to meet humorous, optimistic and, above all, honest female, 25-35, to lavish attention on. Box 18157.

ATTRACTIVE, non-sexist male, 39, seeks intelligent, stimulating female (photo please). Lincolnshire. Box 15257.

MOODY WELSHMAN
wants dowdy frump for meaningless relationship. You really think I'm kidding??
Box 18257.

AHOY! We need to find each other. Professional, young 52, strongly caring, loves outdoors -- walking, sailing, etc. Seeks lady, 40s, with similar interests. Box 18357.

TALL, blue eyed businessman, 36, well built and fit, seeks pretty, intelligent, well educated and occasionally silly lady. Love of foreign travel, walks in the hills, lobster thermidor and pepper steak would help but could accommodate smoked salmon and watersports. Letter, photo, phone number or gentle hint. N.W. Box 18457.

HAN'SOME, smilin', freewheelin' anarchist seeks attractive, bohemian female for love and peace. Address assures reply. Box 18557.

PROFESSIONAL female, appalling cook wants to give it all up and marry a filthy rich man (35-45) with view to permanently eating out. Box 18657.

NEW AGE, but indulgent Cancerian, still awaits all woman woman. South or West. Box 18757.

MUCH TRAVELLED, tall, goodlooking gent (29) seeks relaxed correspondence/meetings with intelligent, humorous, adventurous female with dreams, ideas, opinions and pens. Box 18857.

USED, ABUSED, deceived and divorced man, 33, own teeth and H reg zimmer frame needs either the Samaritans or caring, funny, ordinary girl to save his sanity. 20-35, kids no problem. Box 18957.

QUIET, easy going, male graduate, 29, likes reading, films, theatre, occasional socialising, music and long walks. Seeks lady, 18 to 29, for friendship (possibly more). Too shy to answer this ad, we're probably well suited! Must be non-smoker, and live in London/Surrey area. Please reply by letter enclosing photo. Box 19057.

ERUDITE young man, seeks "big eyed" woman for absolutely anything. Box 19157.

SOLICITOR, 43, single, attractive, fit, sophisticated tastes, interesting, genuine, seeks very pretty, slim, well educated woman c 23-33. London. Photo please. Box 19257.

INTELLIGENT, attractive, blonde lady, 35, Warwickshire, seeks tallish, handsome, sophisticated, non-smoking man, 33-40, to share life, love and home-made lasagne. Photo essential. Box 19357.

38 YEAR OLD bachelor, interested in music and books, seeks female, living in South West London for friendship and romance. Photo and telephone number please. Box 19457.

MEDIC (female), attractive, leggy, blonde, warm and humorous. Interested lively conversation, the Arts, extended family and friends but also quiet things -- time for reflection, gardening, swimming, colours -- seeks civilised, intelligent, unusual graduate counterpart, 40's, to bring spark to otherwise contented life. Box 18057.

GLIMMERING GIRL with apple-blossom in her hair for attractive, lovable, wandering Aengus. Genuine. Photo/phone please. Home Counties/London. Box 15357.

ATTRACTIVE, dark, male lawyer, 42, busy and unattached, seeks voluptuous, mature, rubenesque lady to wine and dine, relax and travel with. South East. Box 17657.

EASY GOING, humorous young man, 31, good looking, passionate, sensitive, physical, open and loving, seeks *natural,* intelligent woman as a lover, friend and possible partner to laugh at life with. South Coast. Box 17757.

UNATTACHED big 6 partner, sought by unattached, professional woman, 37, for long term relationship. London area. Box 17857.

I NEED a wife to help produce. With lots of love and luck; son and heir to my country estate. I am single and very sexy. Try me. Photos returned. Midlands area please. Box 17957.

STUNNING extrovert, Leftish, Leo lady with cub, seeks educated man, 35-45, with sense of humour and charm for mutual adoration. Hampshire. Box 19557.

MALE GRADUATE (25), soon to be returning to UK after four years abroad, seeks slightly older, cultured lady for introduction to the joys of London life. Box 19657.

EXPATRIATE Englishman seeks English woman (20s or 30s). Successful, professional business, skiing, sailing, etc, seems incomplete without English companion (values and sense of humour). International travel includes frequent UK visits. California. Box 19757.

BATH/BRISTOL. 39, single, male, professional, successful, intelligent, thoughtful seeks lady for friendship, country walks, eating out, etc. Send decent photo and phone number. Box 7057.

MILLIONAIRE mid 40's wishes to meet young lady, 18-25. If you are under 8 ½ stone, very attractive, a natural athlete with a good education, and a good sense of humour, if you would like to travel the world in unusual ways and windsurf from deserted beaches, if you can enjoy serious conversation and also wild parties, then please apply with photograph and telephone number to Box 8557.

LADY BARRISTER would you like to meet an English gentleman aged 45, very presentable, a mite reactionary but with a legendary sense of humour? Are you interested in art, politics, wine, the countryside and outdoor sports? Then please write Box 0758.

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YOUNG MAN (24), recently moved to East Sussex, has been told that this is a wild, wicked and wanton county. He needs a woman to help him find out if this is true. Normal, oddball, sane or deprived, anyone considered. Box 19857.

ATTRACTIVE male oar seeks flowing female stream to row in with. Box 19957.

MALE, 52, no son and heir, seeks female in thirties who wishes to assist in this search for immortality. Interests in fellwalking, touring France, quiet socialising, gardening, swimming etc. Smutty sense of humour would not go amiss. Essex coastal. Photo/phone. Box 20057.

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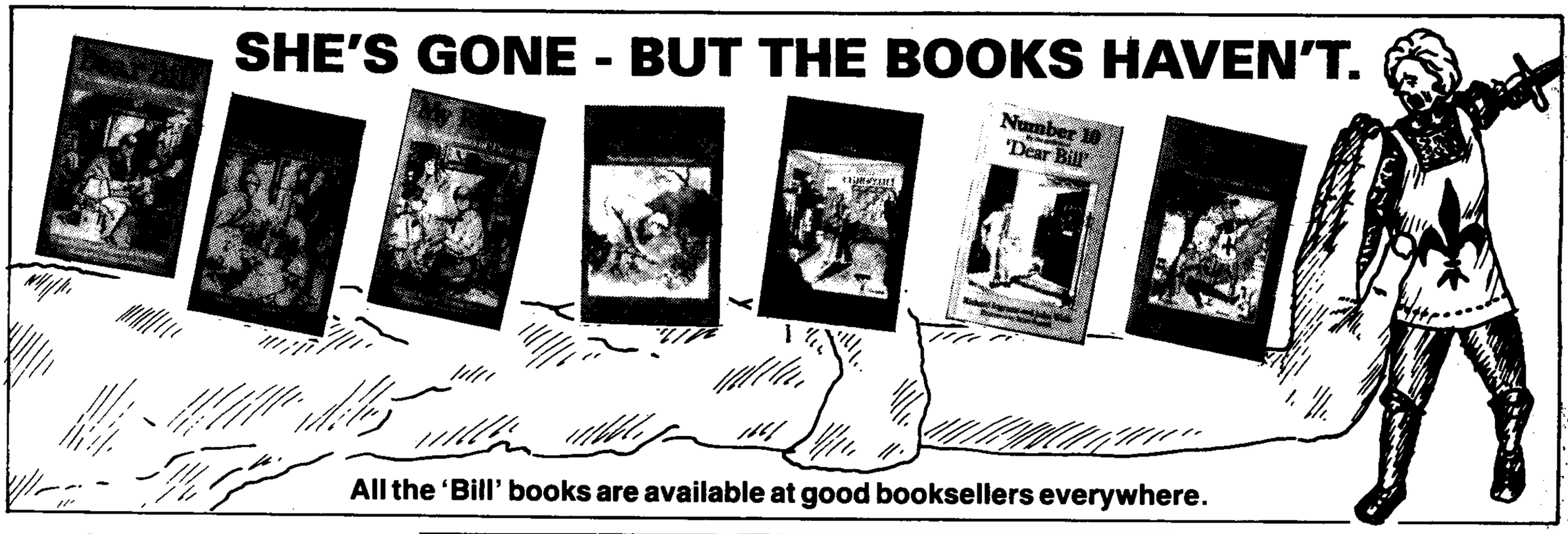

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